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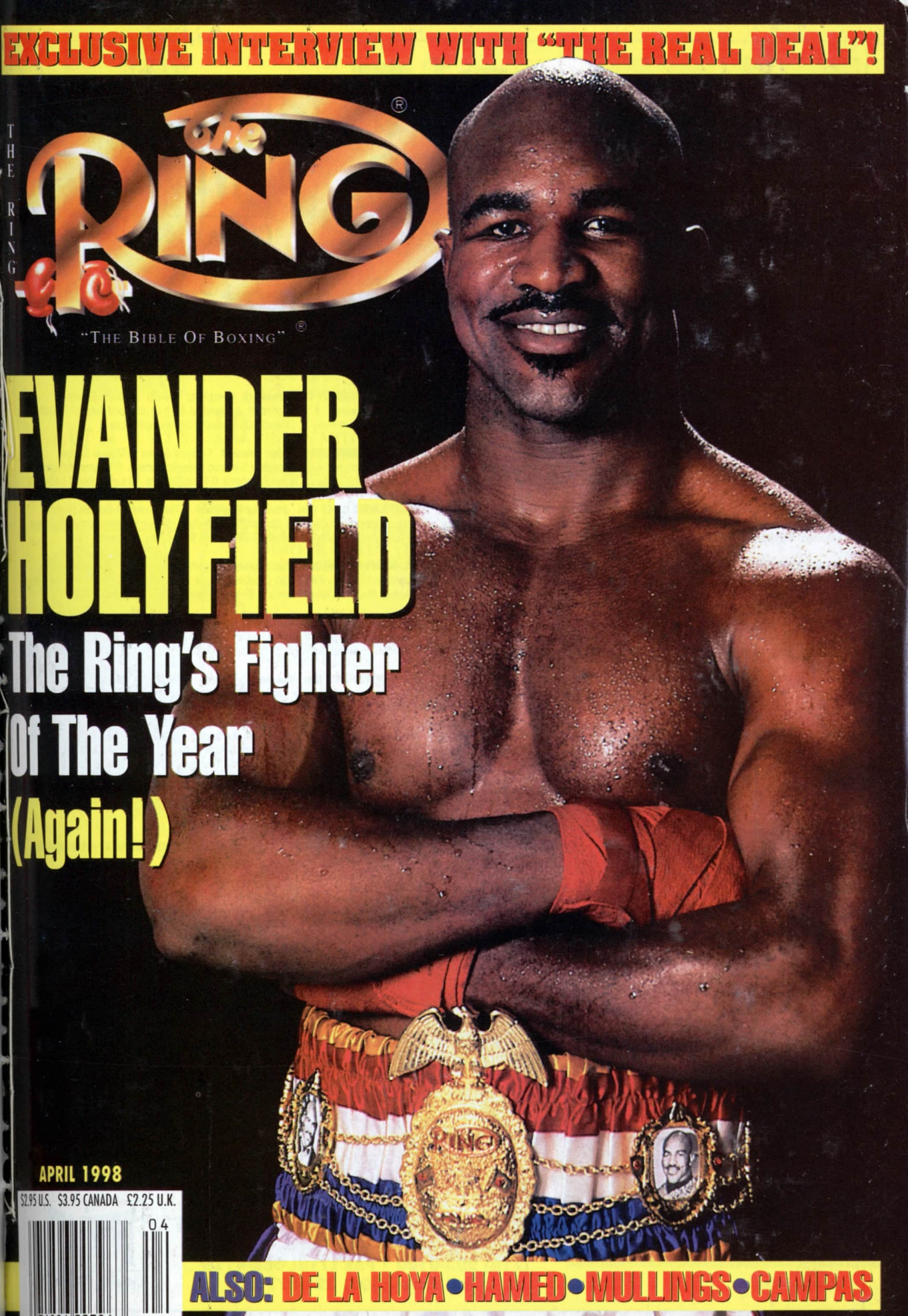

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CRUISERWEIGHT Ch: James Toney 1-Nate Miller 2-Marcelo Dominquez 3-Uriah Grant 4-Fabrice Tiozzo 5-Robert Daniels 6-Kenny Keene 7-Don Diego Poeder 8-Kenny Murphy 9-Rick Roufus 10-Tiwon Taylor

LT. HEAVYWEIGHT Ch: Drake Thadzi 1-Roy Jones Jr. 2-Dariusz Michalczewski 3-Montell Griffin 4-William Guthrie 5-Fredrik Alvarez 6-Lou Del Valle 7-Virgil Hill 8-Jose Luis Rivera 9-Chris Eubank 10-Michael Nunn

SP.MIDDLEWEIGHT Ch: Mads Larsen 1-Steve Collins 2-Frank Liles 3-Robin Reid 4-Joseph Kiwanuka 5-Roberto Duran 6-Charles Brewer 7-Henry Wharton 8-Vinny Pazienza 9-Jorge Castro 10-Omar Sheika

MIDDLEWEIGHT Ch: Freeman Barr 1-Bernard Hopkins 2-Julio Cesar Green 3-Keith Holmes 4-Dana Rosenblatt 5-William Joppy 6-Rual Frank 7-Paul Vaden 8-Quincy Taylor 9-Lonnie Bradley 10-Jerry Brown

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHT Ch: Vacant 1-Felix Trinidad 2-Laurent Boudaouani 3-Winky Wright 4-Raul Marquez 5-Terry Norris 6-Julio Cesar Vasquez 7-Kieth Mullings 8-Hector Camacho 9-Nick Rupa 10-Anthony Stephens

WELTERWEIGHT Ch: Jose Rivera 1-Felix Trinidad 2-Oscar De La Hoya 3-Ike Quartey 4-Pernell Whitaker 5-Jose Luis Lopez 6-Oba Carr 7-Michael Loewe 8-Patrick Charpentier 9-Vernon Forrest 10-Anthony Jones

JR. WELTERWEIGHT Ch: Johar Lashin 1-Vince Phillips 2-Miguel Angel Gonzalez 3-Khalid Rahilou 4-Kostya Tszyu 5-Frankie Randell 6-Julio Cesar Chavez 7-Paul Nava 8-Alfonso Sanchez 9-Hector Lopez 10-Rodney Wilson

LIGHTWEIGHT Ch: Tony Pep 1-Orzubek Nazarov 2-Shane Mosley 3-Steve Johnston 4-Phillip Holiday 5-George Scott 6-Lamar Murphy 7-Jean Baptist Mendy 8-John John Molina 9-Marco Rudolph 10-Billy Irwin

JR. LIGHTWEIGHT Ch: Vacant 1-Arturo Gatti 2-Genaro Hernandez 3-Yong Soo Choi 4-Angel Manfredy 5-Joel Casamayor 6-Azumah Nelson 7-Arnulfo Castillo 8-Julien Lorcy 9-Dennis Holbaek 10-Jesus Chavez

FEATHERWEIGHT Ch: Vacant 1-Naseem Hamed 2-Luisito Espinosa 3-Wilfredo Vasquez 4-Tom Johnson 5-Franciso Segura 6-David Toledo 7-Radford Beasley 8-Kevin Kelly 9-Orlando Canizales 10-Welcome Ncita

JR. FEATHERWEIGHT Ch: Vacant 1-Junior Jones 2-Vuyani Bungu 3-Antonio Cermino 4-Erik Morales 5-Marco Antonio Barrera 6-Wayne McCullough 7-Kennedy McKinney 8-Daniel Zaragoza 9-Rico Siodora 10-Lehlohonolo Ledwaba

BANTAMWEIGHT Ch: Johnny Bredahl 1-Tim Austin 2-Robbie Regan 3-Nana Konadu 4-Daorung Siriwat 5-Jorge Julio 6-Sirimon Nakornthornparkview 7-Paulie Ayala 8-Mbulelo Botile 9-Veeraphol Sahaprom 10-Patrick Quka

JR. BANTAMWEIGHT Ch: Vacant 1-Johnny Tapia 2-Gerry Penalosa 3-Yokthai Sith Oar 4-Katsuya Onizuka 5-Luis Bolanos 6-Ratanchai Sor Voraphin 7-Abbey Mnisi 8-Danny Romero 9-Hiroshi Kawashima 10-Harold Grey

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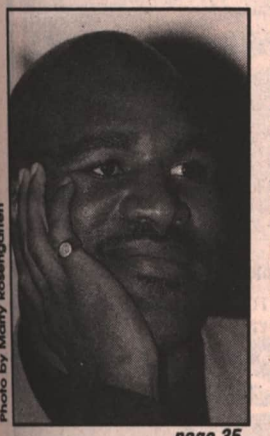

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

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Cover: Holyfield by Al Bello/Allsport

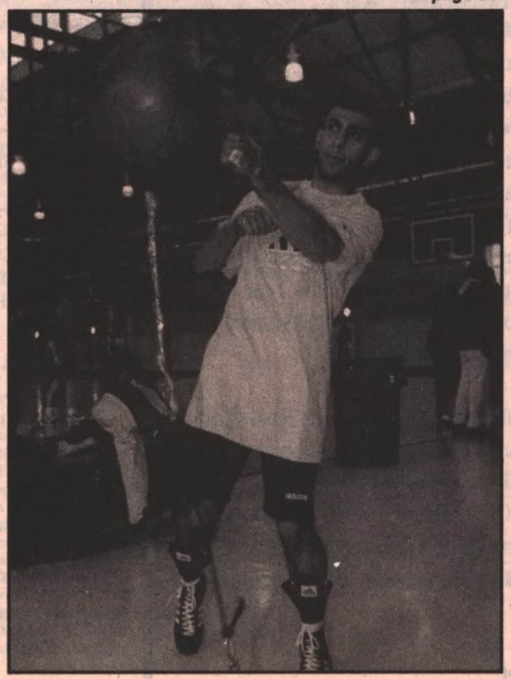

Photo by Jamie Squires/Allsport

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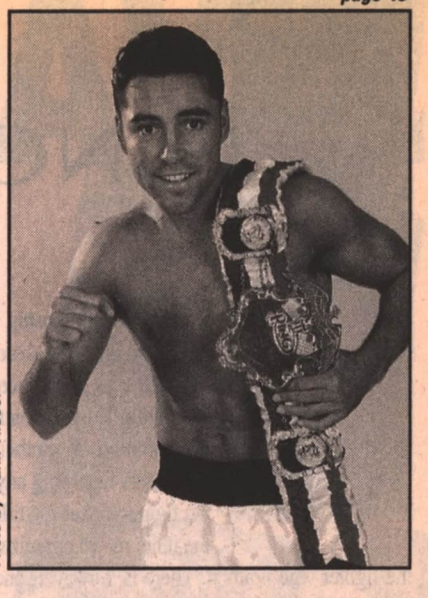

Photo by Frank Vitucci

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RINGSIDE

The championship belt has been boxing's ultimate status symbol for so long, the words title and belt have become almost synonymous. But as titles have become splintered and the number of belts has multiplied to a point where damned near everybody is some sort of champion or another, we have been forced to make qualitative judgments regarding any belt's value. Today, we live in an era when the fighter makes the title, and even the value of the belts awarded by the three major organizations—WBC, WBA, IBF—is determined by the fighter who holds it. There is, however, one belt that still packs as big a punch as ever, and that's THE RING belt.

Partially because of the confusion surrounding who, exactly, has the best claim to a title, the magazine no longer awards championship belts per se. Currently, the only way a fighter can receive THE RING belt is by being the magazine's Fighter of the Year or residing atop its Pound-For-Pound Ratings. This month we honor the two most recent recipients, Evander Holyfield, THE RING's 1997 Fighter of the Year, and Oscar De La Hoya, the latest leader in the mythical pound-for-pound derby.

It is the second year in a row that Holyfield has garnered our top yearly award, making him the first fighter to do so since Muhammad Ali in 1974 and '75. Overall, it's "The Real Deal's" third Fighter of the Year honor, with the first coming in '87.

Not too surprisingly, Holyfield's biggest competitor was none other than De La Hoya, who definitely accomplished enough in '97 to make it a close race. But in the end, it was the intangibles that made Commander Vander a back-to-back winner. The stats themselves—a DQ win over Mike Tyson and a kayo of Michael Moorer—are solid, but not particularly awe-inspiring. You have to look beyond the win-loss column to understand why Holyfield was honored again. Two items stand out: the courageous and noble manner in which he handled "The Bite," both during and after the notorious incident, and the fact that he united two-thirds of the sport's greatest prize by avenging his previous loss to Moorer.

When informed that if he won again in '98, he would become the first boxer in history to win THE RING's Fighter of the Year award three consecutive years, Evander looked at the belt, nodded to himself, and said, "You know, I think I'll just go ahead and do that." While it will certainly take some doing, an excellent start would be beating WBC champion Lennox Lewis.

One fight dominated the remainder of our annual awards, and that was Arturo Gatti's incredible come-from-behind fifth-round kayo of Gabriel Ruelas. The brutal shootout had considerable late-year competition for Fight of the Year honors from the Naseem Hamed-Kevin Kelley spectacular. But in the end, Gatti-Ruelas was so viscerally exhilarating, it also garnered Knockout of the Year and Round of the Year honors. Upset of the Year went to Vince Phillips' surprising 10th-round knockout of Kostya Tszyu, a result that scuttled plans for a Tszyu-De La Hoya fight and reinvigorated Phillips' career.

***

Boxing belts seems to be the unofficial theme of this month's issue. "THE RING Classic" *(page 68)* delves into the history of belts, taking an in-depth look at the gold-plated, jewel-incrusted hunk of hardware that was once John L. Sullivan's pride and joy. There's also Pete Ehrmann's revealing piece, "Pinkey Mitchell: The Only Fighter To Win A Title At The Ballot Box" *(page 30)*, the remarkable story of the first junior welterweight champion. And, of course, there's also the normal monthly dose of old-fashioned belts in the mouth to keep things in perspective.

Nigel Collins
Editor-In-Chief

Volume 77, No. 4 April 1998

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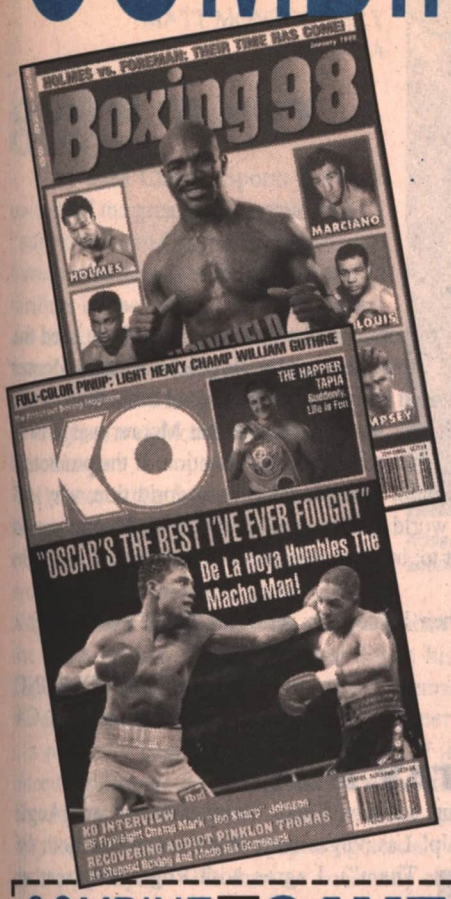

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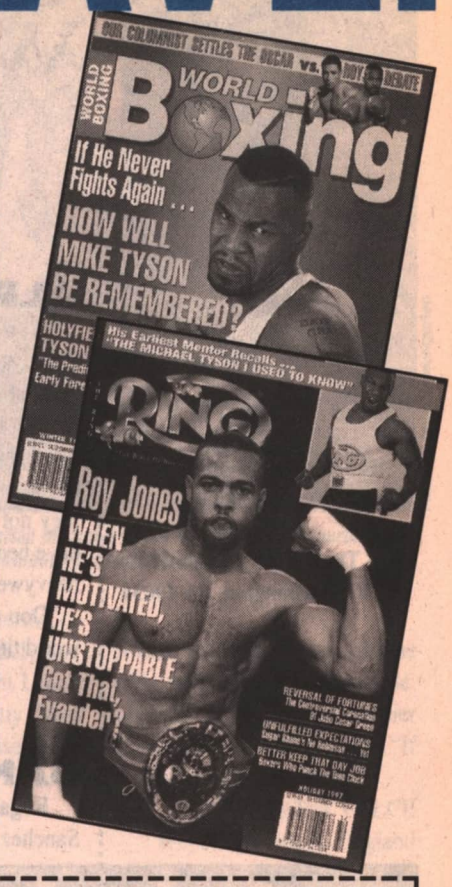

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COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

ALPHABET ANARCHY

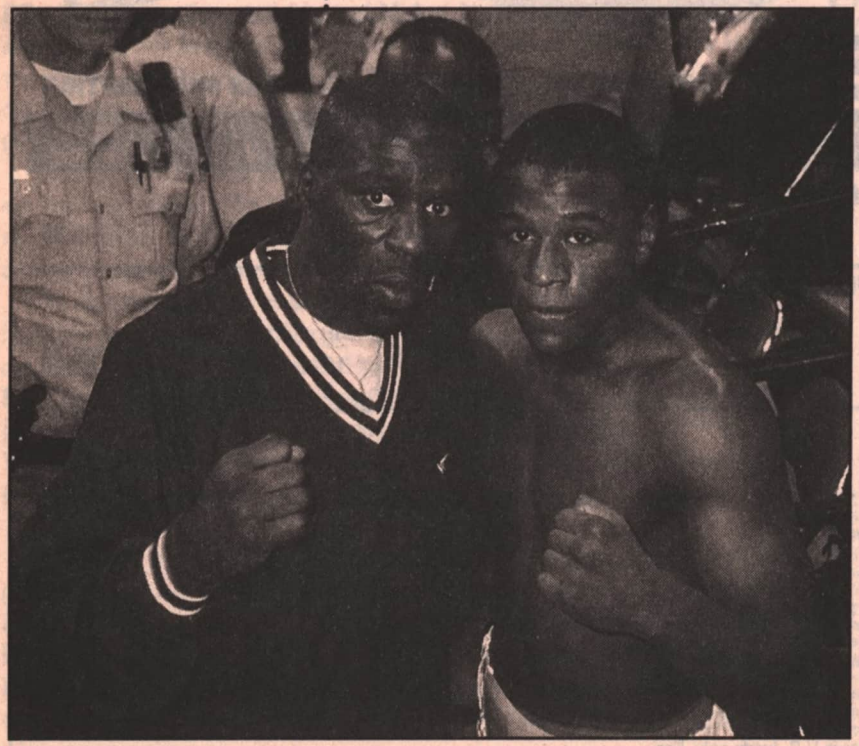
As a big boxing fan, I feel that I have to express my opinions on how promoters have used the alphabet organizations to confuse and mislead fans. During the Evander Holyfield-Michael Moorer unification bout, announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. announced Holyfield as the second three-time champion in history (Ali is the other). Then, when introducing Moorer, he said that Moorer was a two-time heavyweight champion and former light heavyweight champion. My question: If the promoters chose to acknowledge Moorer's WBO light heavyweight championship as a world title, why did they not include his WBO heavyweight title on his world title resume? If they had, Moorer would have been a three-time titlist. I'm glad they chose not to; but then they shouldn't claim him as a light heavyweight champion, either.

Don King and his cronies should do more on their homework. After all, the WBO is either a world title or it isn't; you can't have it both ways.

ANTHONY HUNG
Thousand Oaks, CA

SANCHEZ SHOULD STAY PUT

Regarding your January '98 story on a matchup between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Augie Sanchez ("The Sanchez-Mayweather Feud Heats Up! Las Vegas Isn't Big Enough For Both Of Them"), I agree with Roger Mayweather that Sanchez must be crazy if he wants to step into the ring with Mayweather. The fact that they fought in the amateurs aside, the pro game is a whole different ballgame. In the amateurs you don't get credit for body-punching, knockdowns, or ring generalship. You get headgear and white-tipped gloves that have to hit the target, mainly the head. You can win fights with pitty-pat punches ala Tillman vs. Tyson.



Undefeated junior lightweight Floyd Mayweather Jr., shown with his uncle and trainer Roger Mayweather, would tear up Augie Sanchez, reader Matt Montgomery suggests.

Right now, if these two boxers fought, I can see Mayweather knocking out Sanchez in two or three rounds. Mayweather is bigger, stronger, and has more experience than Sanchez. Sanchez is a good fighter, I take nothing away from him. But he has no chance of victory.

Maybe down the road, when they are champions, they can fight—even though I don't think that will happen, because Mayweather will be fighting at junior welter and welterweight. Sanchez will probably be comfortable at lightweight. Floyd will be too big for Sanchez to handle. Here's a note

of advice for Sanchez: Worry about fighting some more fights and get some experience before you step into the ring with Floyd. If the fight ever happens, Mayweather in two.

MATT MONTGOMERY
Spokane, WA

DOWN IS NOT OUT

Why does Classic Sports Network own all of the great fights, while today's "superior" conditioned fighters can barely muster together a half-dozen thrillers in one year's time? The reason we must watch the oldies is because today's fighters are not given the chance when the bell finally rings. They are never given a chance to rebound from a knockdown.

I'm not a big fan of Lennox Lewis (as a matter of fact, I think Holyfield can beat him), but how do we know he wouldn't have become some form of "legend" upon rising from the canvas against Oliver McCall in the same fashion Floyd Patterson did in his third fight with Ingemar Johansson? What about Lyle-Foreman? Let's return to the days of the 10-count. About the only fighter who gets the benefit of one is Tyson. Let's face it, many of those prime-conditioned fighters are not going to risk death with one knockdown. History has proven it is the long, sustained beatings that lead to ring deaths. With quick stoppages, fighters are cheated of starting their own "myths." The fans are constantly cheated by inconclusive finishes and your magazine is cheated, because it is left to cover mostly mediocre fights.

ALLIE TARANTINO
New Rochelle, NY

THE MONEY PITS

Yet again the greed that has infested professional boxing, greed that makes Gordon Gekko seem like an altruist, has once more jeopardized a potential superfight. I'm referring of course to "Terrible" Terry Norris, who was upset by the unheralded, albeit good fighter, Keith Mullings, in what was ostensibly a tuneup for a bout with Oscar De La Hoya. But rather than face Felix Trinidad in a much-anticipated matchup, he split from Don King, figuring he'll make more money fighting De La Hoya than Trinidad, which is now a moot point.

Norris was at the point where he had it all and should have been more interested in fighting for the kudos victory brings than for a few extra dead Presidents. He has earned enough money not to be bothered by making a couple million bucks less because he fought Trinidad, not De La Hoya. Norris knows the importance of having another "name" notched under his win column. If you are what you eat, then in boxing you are who you beat. Now it's all up in flames, and I'm so unsympathetic to the fact that, in the pursuit for money, he lost his title, his marketability, his pride, and the chance to fight on his terms.

Mike Tyson, ironically one of Norris' favorite fighters, did the same. Rather than fight Lennox Lewis, he paid him to step aside, taking on the apparently "shot" Holyfield for an obscene number of dollars, and lost miserably. Well, you know what they say, "If you let money be your God, it will hound you like the Devil."

ANTHONY FALCE
Weybridge Surrey, England

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Naseem Hamed did not completely convince reader Julian Michaels of his royalty with his fourth-round knockout of Kevin Kelley in his American debut on December 19 at Madison Square Garden.

UNPROVEN PRINCE

Just when we thought we'd seen it all, along comes featherweight sensation "Prince" Naseem Hamed. Success breeds confidence, and with a perfect 29-0 ring record, with 27 knockouts, it's quite apparent that The Prince's definitive stoppage of former champion Kevin Kelley at Madison Square Garden has captured the attention and imagination of even the sternest American fight fan.

It remains to be seen, however, if this current British invader will challenge the Beatles and Lady Diana as England's most noteworthy conqueror of the former 13 colonies.

Questions will surface, comparisons will inevitably be made. How does The Prince measure up with past, present, and future champions? Yes, he's got the right stuff: true grit, heart, and guts. But other elements could bring about his demise and place him on the endangered species list, primarily his brazen self-serving and contemptible behavior that begs for someone to knock that pompous grin off his Princely face and serve him a common platter of humble pie.

Immediately after the fight, Hamed stood on the ring ropes, raising his arms toward the heavens exclaiming, "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar." Yes Prince, I agree God is Great.

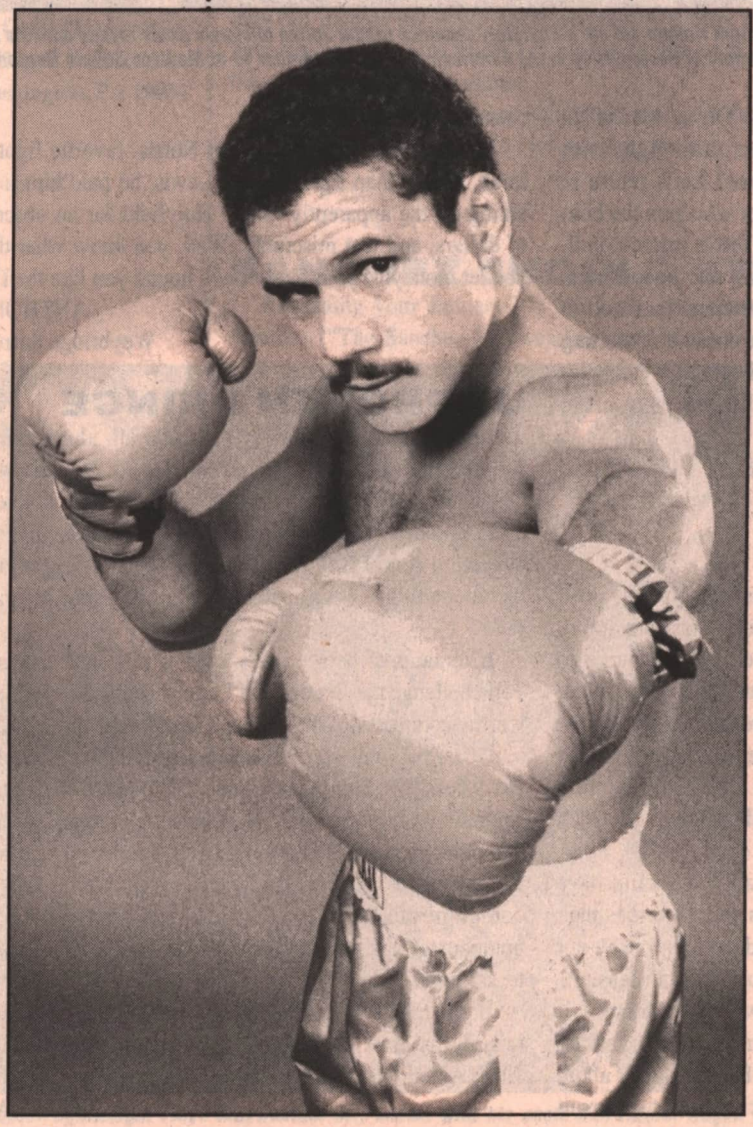
JULIAN MICHAELS
Tempe, AZ ■

ROUND ONE

EDWIN ROSARIO, 1963-1997

Although the circumstances surrounding the premature death of Edwin Rosario on December 1 are unclear, there is no questioning the greatness that "El Chapo" achieved during his life. The Puerto Rican held world lightweight titles on three separate occasions, and also captured the WBA junior welterweight title late in his career, upsetting Californian Loreto Garza in his own backyard in 1991.

But for all his thrilling victories, a pair of losses stand out as probably the most memorable fights of Rosario's storied career. In June 1986, Rosario outdueled unbeaten Hector Camacho only to see "The Macho Man" receive an unpopular decision, and in November of '87, Rosario gave rising Mexican star Julio Cesar Chavez all he could handle before succumbing in the 11th round. Of course, Rosario also racked up quite a few unforgettable wins on the way to a 42-6 (36) record, including victories over Edwin Viruet, Howard Davis, and highly favored Livingstone Bramble.



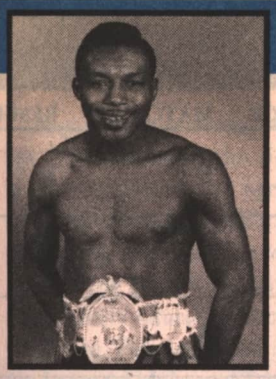
The always-exciting Rosario was making another comeback before his untimely death

In '93, Rosario was set for his long-awaited rematch with Camacho, but after Camacho reneged and substitute Frankie Randall kayoed Rosario in the seventh, El Chapo's career appeared to be over. Rosario had struggled with drug problems for years, but, displaying his incredible ability to bounce back from adversity, the Puerto Rican had four successful comeback fights this year before tragedy struck on December 1.

It was determined shortly after Rosario's death that he had died of an acute pulmonary edema, a lung swelling that can cause heart failure. There was debate over whether drugs were a factor. A Puerto Rican television station reported that Rosario had died of a drug overdose, but those close to Rosario insisted that drugs were not a factor in his death. The pathologist's report had not been issued by press time. But regardless of the cause of his death, Rosario will be remembered as one of the most consistently exciting fighters of recent years, and one of the greatest in Puerto Rican history.

—Mario Rivero Martino

JOE BROWN, 1926-1997



Brown: Hall of Famer dies at 71

Although his name isn't usually mentioned when fight fans discus the greatest lightweights of all-time, supporters of Joe Brown could make a strong case on his behalf. Brown, who died of cancer in his native New Orleans on November 21, won the lightweight title on August 24, 1956, with a 15-round decision over Wallace "Bud" Smith, and kept it until April 21, 1962, when he was outpointed by Carlos Ortiz. In between, Brown tallied 11 successful defenses, one less than division-leader Roberto Duran.

Brown, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996, was THE RING's Fighter of the Year in '61, mainly on the strength of his 15-round decision over England's Dave Charnley, an outstanding bout that received Fight of the Year honors.

Part of Brown's appeal was the fact that he was already 30 when he won the title and closing in on his 44th birthday when he finally retired in 1970, following more than 25 years as a pro. It was "Old Bones'" superb craftsmanship and sharp combination punching that allowed him to be so successful for so long, and also enabled him to win many of his 40 overseas bouts against local heroes in 16 different countries.

Brown, 104-42-13 (48), served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and took part in eight island invasions during his tour of duty on a minesweeper in the South Pacific. After hanging up his gloves, he lived quietly in New Orleans with his sister, having lost most of his ring earnings in investments.

—Nigel Collins

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

In searching for an answer to the seemingly simple question of why men engage in the brutal sport of boxing, Donald McRae ends up reflecting that question back on himself, wondering why he can't turn away from a sport that so often alters and ends lives. In *Dark Trade* (380 pages, Mainstream Publishing, £9.99), McRae concludes after witnessing Mike Tyson's horrific ear bite that "boxing spares no one, not even the most devout of believers." *Dark Trade* captures multiple sides of all of boxing's mini-dramas. Evander Holyfield is depicted as a victim of more than just a bite: "With nothing more to prove, Holyfield, like Tyson, like all the boxers I knew, could not stop fighting."

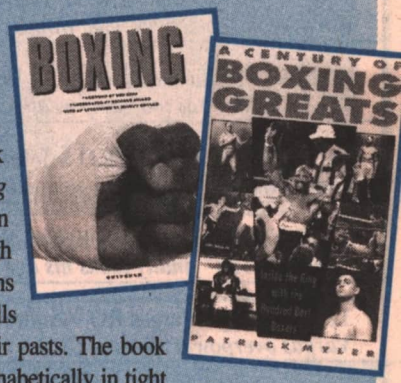
What makes McRae's book so intriguing is the way he humanizes the superstars with whom he has come in close contact since he began his research in 1991. We see Oscar De La Hoya as a boy, trying to figure out what he wants from life—and whether it's what his father wants for him. We see Tyson as the enigmatic nut McRae can't quite crack, the abuser and the abused. We see James Toney falling from grace, left seemingly with only his mother and McRae still believing in him.

But the most gripping moments of *Dark Trade* are when McRae tells the near-fatal stories of Michael Watson and Gerald McClellan, and recounts watching Bradley Stone and Jimmy Garcia die for their sport. While the death and destruction make McRae cringe, they are also a vital part of why he, like the rest of us, can't turn away.

—Eric Raskin

Want to read about a slight little Welshman named Jimmy Wilde, who promoters were afraid to let box because they felt he was too puny? Or how about how Gene Tunney lost so much blood after his brutal fight with Harry Greb, he collapsed in his dressing room?

Believe us, you do.



It's all there in Patrick Myler's *A Century Of Boxing Greats* (393 pages, Robson Publishers, $29.95), a thorough collection of boxing champions throughout this century that tells interesting vignettes from their pasts. The book is reader-friendly, laid out alphabetically in tight morsels of information that carry vital statistics, nicknames, and a general idea of the fighters' lives and skills.

The fascinating part of the book is the real stories behind these fighters. For example, many fight fans might not have known that Wilde, a great flyweight champion from 1916-'23, was mugged in his early-70s and spent the last years of his life in a haze, not knowing what a great champion he had been. Myler also scores points for the poignant piece about Muhammad Ali, ending with Ali's shaking hand lighting the Olympic flame in Atlanta and his knowledge that the world has not forgotten him.

On the other end of the pugilism literature scale is Christian Delcourt's *Boxing* (290 pages, Universe Publishing, $29.95), which contains photos so out of focus that the reader may need 3-D glasses to view them. The section on Evander Holyfield includes a nice closeup of the champ's freshly bitten right ear, but contains little information as to what led to the bite. There are other segments of the book that just do not carry enough interest to either the casual boxing fan or the hardcore fan. The book does include some great shots, such as one showing a determined Tyson taking a shot at a defensive Holyfield. But the art, which is supposed to be the selling point of the book, is often muffled by blurred shots that appear as if they were taken off a TV screen.

—Joe Santoliquito

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
12-5-97	**Keith Holmes KO 11 Paul Vaden**	**Show**	**WBC m**	**A-**	**B**	**B-**
	Vaden couldn't hit at junior middleweight; what was he doing at 160?					
12-6-97	Butterbean W 4 Doug Phillips	PPV	h	D	C	C-
	The Bean mugs his way through another farce					
12-6-97	**Yory Boy Campas KO 8 Raul Marquez**	**PPV**	**IBF jm**	**A-**	**A**	**A**
	Wild brawl ends with Marquez unrecognizable; Campas finally wins a big one					
12-6-97	**Keith Mullings KO 9 Terry Norris**	**PPV**	**WBC jm**	**A**	**B+**	**A**
	Upset! Norris gets old overnight; where has Mullings been hiding?					
12-6-97	**Oscar De La Hoya KO 8 Wilfredo Rivera**	**PPV**	**WBC w**	**A**	**B**	**B**
	Pretty much what we expected; De La Hoya too strong, too fast					
12-8-97	Rodney Jones KO 1 Craig Kitka	FOXSN	jm	B-	B	C+
	Jones ambushes Youngstown's Kitka, sends fans home early					
12-9-97	Herol Graham W 12 Vinny Pazienza	USA	sm	B+	B	C-
	Battle of the comeback kids, with Graham winning in a snoozer					
12-12-97	Freddie Norwood KO 6 Benito Rodriguez	ESPN	f	C+	B-	B-
	"Li'l Hagler" has too many weapons for game Mexican					
12-12-97	**Erik Morales KO 8 John Lowey**	**ESPN**	**WBC jf**	**A**	**B-**	**A-**
	Hand injury brings end to competitive bout; Lowey tougher than advertised					
12-13-97	Larry Donald W 12 Tim Witherspoon	HBO	h	B-	B-	C+
	"Terrible Tim" finally looks his age in dropping lopsided decision					
12-13-97	Goyo Vargas KO 9 Andre Cray	FOXSN	l	C	B	B-
	Vargas overpowers limited Cray					
12-18-97	Angel Vazquez KO 5 Bernardo Quinones	ESPN2	USBA f	B-	A	C+
	Vazquez is starting to look an awful lot like a young Edwin Rosario					
12-19-97	Kennedy McKinney KO 4 Junior Jones	HBO	jf	A	A+	A
	Jones punches himself out, McKinney's right hand ends it					
12-19-97	Naseem Hamed KO 4 Kevin Kelley	HBO	f	A+	A	A+
	A thrilling six-knockdown shootout; "The Prince" has arrived					
12-20-97	Antonio Diaz W 12 Ahmed Santos	Telemundo	jw	C	A-	B-
	Diaz takes nine rounds out of 12, coasts to victory					
12-20-97	Tracy Patterson KO 8 Manuel Chavez-Tellez	FOXSN	jl	C	B+	B
	Patterson overcomes closed left eye to score kayo with counter rights					
1-6-98	Arthur Williams W 12 Adolpho Washington	USA	USBA c	B	B	B+
	Williams too busy and too fast for persistent Washington					
1-6-98	Tony Marshall KO 8 Orin Osbey	USA	jm	B	B	B
	Marshall overcomes slow start to grind down prospect Osbey					

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime

WILLIE PASTRANO, 1935-1997

Angelo Dundee remembers one of the first times he ever saw Willie Pastrano, who died of liver cancer on December 8 in New Orleans at the age of 62. He was a rather pudgy youngster just out of high school who used to work out in the gym at night because he was so self-conscious about his weight. The legendary trainer also noticed how quick and exceptionally nimble Pastrano was, how he moved so fluidly in the ring. Pastrano's fine footwork is evidenced by the fact that he taught Muhammad Ali how to dance.

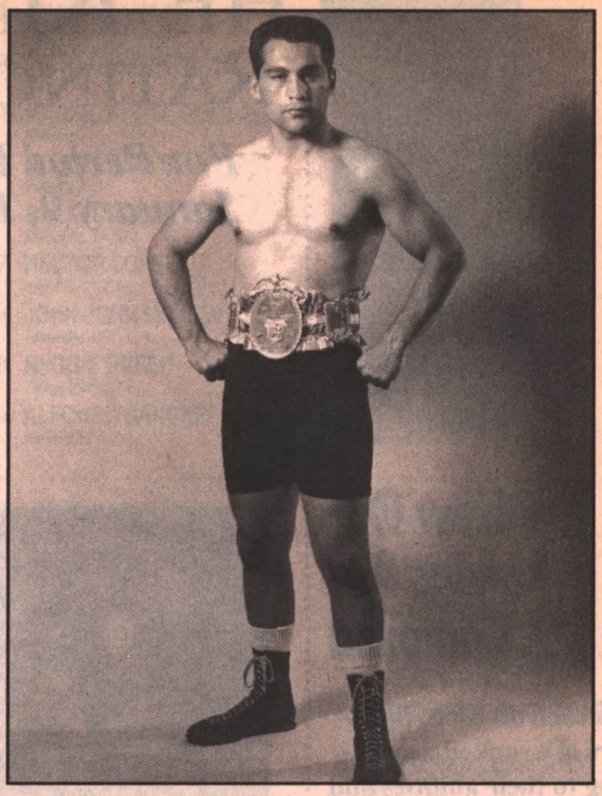
In 1963, Pastrano used those tools to become a light heavyweight champion. He compiled a 63-13-8 (14) record during a career that spanned from 1951 to 1965.

"Willie worked himself into becoming a good fighter, he had great tutelage in Whitey Esneault," said Dundee, who was Pastrano's trainer. "Willie was such a good fighter."

Not noted for his punching power, Pastrano, nicknamed "Willie The Wisp," dazzled crowds with his boxing ability. He outboxed and outsmarted the more muscular Harold Johnson to win a 15-round split decision in Las Vegas for the light heavyweight title on June 1, 1963.

"I can't tell you what a joy it was to be around Willie," said Dundee, who saw Pastrano one final time last March before he died. "We were family, I'm going to miss him."

—Joe Santoliquito



Pastrano, fleet-footed light heavyweight champ of the '60s

THE PUNCHLINES

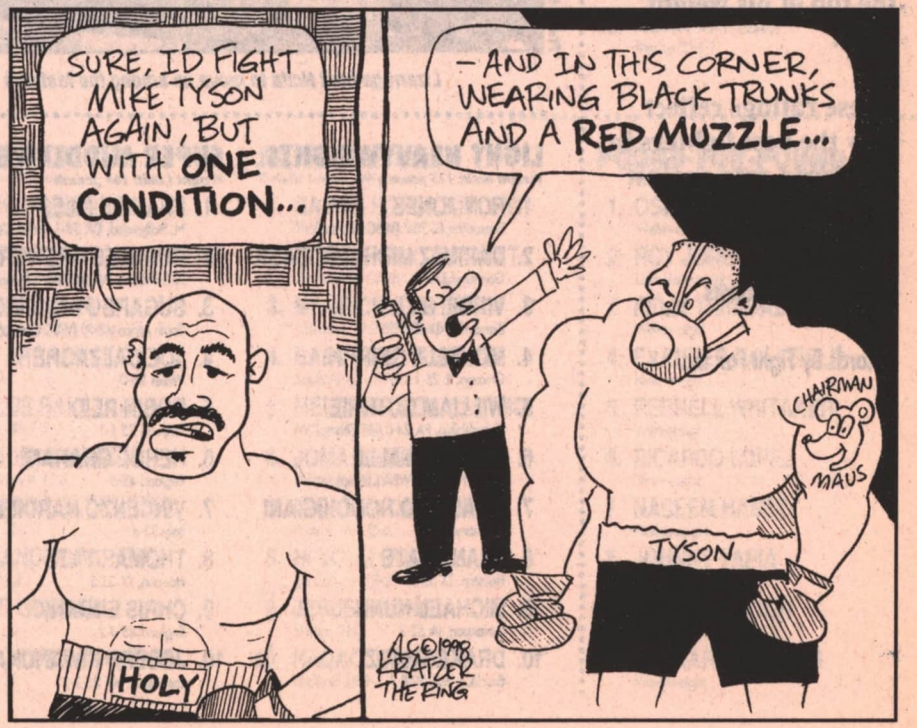
"Based on this performance, there are going to be a lot of managers of heavyweights out there who are going to wish that Chris Byrd was strangled at birth."

—HBO's Larry Merchant, during the December 13 Byrd-Jimmy Thunder fight

"This is America. It's different. It's not like England, where you can fight a tuna fish and get $2-million, $3-million."

—Kevin Kelley, after his fight with Naseem Hamed, referring to the quality of opposition awaiting Hamed in the United States

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 9, 1998

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA *35-3 (WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *32-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **GEORGE FOREMAN** Marshall, TX *76-5*
4. **MICHAEL MOORER** Detroit, MI *39-2*
5. **RAY MERCER** West Orange, NJ *24-4-1*
6. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI *23-0*
7. **SHANNON BRIGGS** New York, NY *31-1*
8. **IKE IBEABUCHI** Dallas, TX *17-0*
9. **DAVID TUA** Totowa, NJ *28-1*
10. **DAVID IZON** Nigeria *20-2*

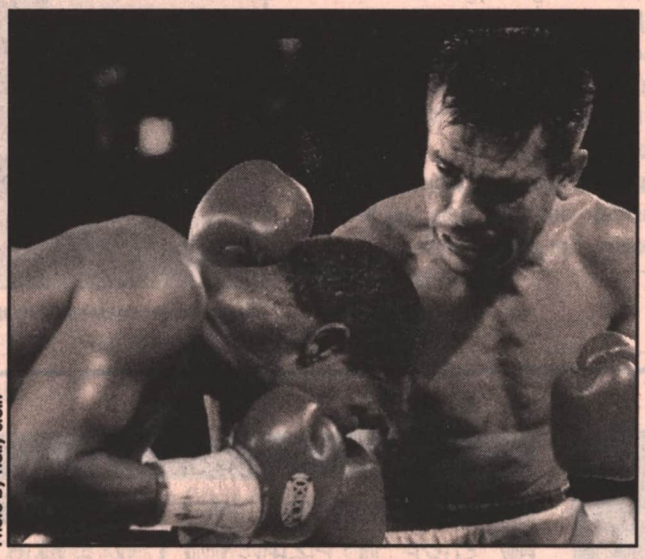


Photo by Holly Stein

Lizarraga beat Ncita to move up among the feathers

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **FABRICE TIOZZO** France *38-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ** Argentina *22-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **IMAMU MAYFIELD** New Brunswick, NJ *17-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **NATE MILLER** Philadelphia, PA *30-5*
5. **CARL THOMPSON** England *22-4*
6. **ROBERT DANIELS** Miami, FL *35-3-1*
7. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS** Las Vegas, NV *28-4-1*
8. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ** Germany *21-0*
9. **TORSTEN MAY** Germany *16-1*
10. **ADOLPHO WASHINGTON** Lexington, KY *26-5-2*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL *35-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany *37-0*
3. **VIRGIL HILL** Bismarck, ND *43-2*
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL *28-1*
5. **WILLIAM GUTHRIE** Philadelphia, PA *24-0 (IBF Champ)*
6. **LOU DEL VALLE** Bronx, NY *27-1 (WBA Champ)*
7. **GRACIANO ROCCHIGIANI** Germany *39-4-1*
8. **FRANK TATE** Houston, TX *39-4*
9. **MICHAEL NUNN** Davenport, IA *52-3*
10. **DRAKE THADZI** Brockton, MA *29-8-1*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **FRANKIE LILES** N. Hollywood, CA *31-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **CHARLES BREWER** Philadelphia, PA *30-5 (IBF Champ)*
3. **SUGARBOY MALINGA** South Africa *42-10 (WBC Champ)*
4. **JOE CALZAGHE** Wales *23-0*
5. **ROBIN REID** England *25-1-1*
6. **HEROL GRAHAM** England *48-5*
7. **VINCENZO NARDIELLO** Italy *33-6*
8. **THOMAS TATE** Houston, TX *33-5*
9. **CHRIS EUBANK** England *45-3-2*
10. **JOSEPH KIWANUKA** Las Vegas, NV *25-2-2*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA *33-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **KEITH HOLMES** Washington, D.C. *30-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **JULIO CESAR GREEN** Brooklyn, NY *22-2 (WBA Champ)*
4. **WILLIAM JOPPY** Washington, D.C. *24-1-1*
5. **OTIS GRANT** Canada *30-1-1*
6. **LONNIE BRADLEY** New York, NY *26-0-1*
7. **ROBERT McCRACKEN** England *30-0*
8. **BRIAN BARBOSA** Providence, RI *23-3*
9. **HASSINE CHERIFI** France *24-2-1*
10. **RYAN RHODES** England *16-1*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **LAURENT BOUDOUANI**
   France *35-2 (WBA Champ)*
2. **YORY BOY CAMPAS**
   Mexico *69-2 (IBF Champ)*
3. **KEITH MULLINGS**
   Brooklyn, NY *15-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **TERRY NORRIS**
   Mission Valley, CA *47-7*
5. **JULIO CESAR VASQUEZ**
   Argentina *59-3*
6. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   St. Petersburg, FL *38-1*
7. **RAUL MARQUEZ**
   Houston, TX *28-1*
8. **BRONCO McKART**
   Monroe, MI *33-2*
9. **HECTOR CAMACHO**
   Orlando, FL *64-4-1*
10. **EMMETT LINTON**
    Tacoma, WA *24-2*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *27-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Norfolk, VA *41-2-1*
3. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico *32-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **IKE QUARTEY**
   Ghana *34-0-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **JOSE LUIS LOPEZ**
   Mexico *40-3-2*
6. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *43-2-1*
7. **PATRICK CHARPENTIER**
   France *26-4-1*
8. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *23-0*
9. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *27-3-1*
10. **ANDREI PESTRIAEV**
    Russia *20-2*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **VINCE PHILLIPS**
   Las Vegas, NV *38-3 (IBF Champ)*
2. **KHALID RAHILOU**
   France *31-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *99-2-1*
4. **MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *42-1*
5. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *19-1-1*
6. **RAFAEL RUELAS**
   Studio City, CA *50-3*
7. **HECTOR LOPEZ**
   Palmdale, CA *37-6-1*
8. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico *45-4*
9. **REGGIE GREEN**
   Clinton, MD *26-2*
10. **ALFONSO SANCHEZ**
    Mexico *17-1*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **ORZUBEK NAZAROV**
   Japan *25-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *23-0 (WBC Champ)*
4. **PHILLIP HOLIDAY**
   South Africa *31-1*
5. **GEORGE SCOTT**
   Pembroke Pines, FL *32-1*
6. **AZUMAH NELSON**
   Ghana *39-4-2*
7. **ISRAEL CARDONA**
   Hartford, CT *27-2*
8. **JEAN-BAPTISTE MENDY**
   France *49-6-2*
9. **ARTUR GRIGORIJAN**
   Uzbekistan *23-0*
10. **CESAR BAZAN**
    Mexico *30-2-1*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **GENARO HERNANDEZ**
   Los Angeles, CA *37-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ *29-1 (IBF Champ)*
3. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *23-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ROBERT GARCIA**
   Oxnard, CA *29-0*
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *22-2-1*
6. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France *36-0-2*
7. **TRACY PATTERSON**
   Highland, NY *60-5-1*
8. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Austin, TX *22-1*
9. **TOM JOHNSON**
   Detroit, MI *45-3-2*
10. **GABE RUELAS**
    Arleta, CA *44-4*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED**
   England *29-0*
2. **LUISITO ESPINOSA**
   Philippines *42-7 (WBC Champ)*
3. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ**
   Puerto Rico *50-7-3 (WBA Champ)*
4. **HECTOR LIZARRAGA**
   Fresno, CA *34-8-5 (IBF Champ)*
5. **KEVIN KELLEY**
   Flushing, NY *47-2-2*
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico *23-1*
7. **ANGEL VAZQUEZ**
   Hartford, CT *15-0*
8. **DERRICK GAINER**
   Pensacola, FL *21-4*
9. **ORLANDO CANIZALES**
   Laredo, TX *46-3-1*
10. **EVER BELENO**
    Colombia *37-3*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **VUYANI BUNGU**
   South Africa *34-2 (IBF Champ)*
2. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico *28-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **KENNEDY McKINNEY**
   Memphis, TN *33-3-1*
4. **ANTONIO CERMENO**
   Venezuela *29-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **JUNIOR JONES**
   Brooklyn, NY *44-3*
6. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Mexico *43-2*
7. **DANIEL ZARAGOZA**
   Mexico *55-8-3*
8. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH**
   Las Vegas, NV *20-1*
9. **FRED NORWOOD**
   St. Louis, MO *28-0-1*
10. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
    Mexico *23-0*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
   Cincinnati, OH *17-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **NANA KONADU**
   Ghana *37-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **JOICHIRO TATSUYOSHI**
   Japan *15-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSUK**
   Thailand *16-1*
5. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO**
   Colombia *37-1*
6. **MBULELO BOTILE**
   South Africa *21-1*
7. **PAULIE AYALA**
   Ft. Worth, TX *23-0*
8. **VEERAPHOL SAHAPROM**
   Thailand *13-1*
9. **DAORUNG C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *61-6-3*
10. **ADAN VARGAS**
    Mexico *25-1-1*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
   Albuquerque, NM *42-0-2 (IBF Champ)*
2. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *39-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **SATOSHI IIDA**
   Japan *23-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *14-1-1*
5. **HYUNG CHUL LEE**
   South Korea *19-6*
6. **HAROLD GREY**
   Colombia *21-2*
7. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia *23-0*
8. **RATANACHAI SOR VORAPIN**
   Thailand *24-3*
9. **JULIO GAMBOA**
   Nicaragua *21-2*
10. **JOEL LUNA ZARATE**
    Mexico *31-2-1*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. *33-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *31-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **JOSE BONILLA**
   Venezuela *24-3 (WBA Champ)*
4. **YURI ARBACHAKOV**
   Japan *23-1*
5. **CARLOS SALAZAR**
   Argentina *46-7-3*
6. **ARTHUR JOHNSON**
   East St. Louis, IL *17-3*
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *26-1*
8. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *35-3*
9. **DAVID GUERAULT**
   France *11-0*
10. **CHOKVIWAT CHOKCHAI**
    Thailand *30-3*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand *36-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **PHICHITNOI C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *18-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia *17-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
   South Africa *47-10-2*
5. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico *50-5-4*
6. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *22-3-1*
7. **MICHAEL CARBAJAL**
   Phoenix, AZ *45-4*
8. **HI YONG CHOI**
   South Korea *19-2*
9. **JESUS CHONG**
   Mexico *31-8*
10. **HADAO C.P. GYM**
    Thailand *36-9-1*

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Welterweight
2. **ROY JONES**
   Light Heavyweight
3. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Welterweight
4. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
   Heavyweight
5. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Welterweight
6. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Strawweight
7. **NASEEM HAMED**
   Featherweight
8. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
   Junior Bantamweight
9. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Flyweight
10. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
    Middleweight

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May 1983: Michael Spinks Wins It All. Plus: Spinks-Braxton color, Bob Arum, Marvin Hagler, Collins-LaPaglia.

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Aug. 1983: Roberto Duran: One "Mas" Time. Plus: Larry Holmes, Colin Jones, Jimmy Montoya, Alexis Arguello, Billy Petrolle, Duran-Moore, Frazier-Bugner, Resto-Collins, Escalera-Hatcher.

Sept. 1983: Exclusive: Sugar Ray Leonard Talks About His Past, Present, And Future. Plus: Hagler-Duran, Jaime Garza, Panama Lewis, Spinks-Muhammad, Bobo Olson, Mustafa Hamsho, Muniz-Chandler, Hearns-Sutherland.

Oct. 1983: Special Hagler-Duran Program. Plus: Best fighter poll, Jose Sulaiman, Milton McCrory, Camacho-Limon, DeLeon-Gordon, Hamsho-Benitez, who's who, Bill McNeese.

Nov. 1983: Gerrie Coetzee: The New Heavyweight Champ Sets His Sights On Holmes. Plus: Alexis Arguello, Murray Sutherland, James J. Braddock, Muhammad Ali.

Feb. 1984: Don King Talks And Talks And Talks. Plus: Leonard's return, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, 1983 quotes, Marvin Hagler, Johnny Bratton, Gerald Hayes, Hagler-Duran color.

April 1984: Sugar Ray Leonard: "I'm Gonna Be Better Than Ever!" Plus: Ratings of 8,000 fighters, Henry Armstrong, Don Lee, Koji Kobayashi, Mancini-Chacon (color).

June 1984: Bumphus, Lockridge, Duva: 'That Championship Year.' Plus: Ferdie Pacheco, Harry Arroyo, Holmes-Coetzee preview, Pipino Cuevas, Aaron Pryor, Battling Nelson-Joe Gans, Witherspoon-Page.

July 1984: Bazooka's Aim Is True: Gomez Shoots Down LaPorte In The Battle For San Juan. Plus: Michael Spinks, Vinny Pazienza, Tyrone Crawley, Leonard's comeback, Chandler-Sandoval, Hagler-Roldan.

Aug. 1984: Olympic Special: Mark Breland Leads A Strong Squad. Plus: Leonard-Howard, Davila-Sanchez, Bonecrusher-Bruno, Bramble-Mancini, Hatcher-Bumphus, Garza-Orozco.

Oct. 1984: The Beast From The East: John Mugabi Strikes Terror Into The Hearts Of Men. Plus: Olympics, Bill Costello, Davey Moore, Wilfred Benitez, King's heavyweights.

Dec. 1984: Hagler Hammers Hamsho. Plus: Barry McGuigan, boxing's best, James Broad, Julian Jackson, Pinklon Thomas.

Jan. 1985: Holmes-Bonecrusher Color Action. Plus: Gerry Cooney, pro debuts (Breland, Hill, Taylor, Biggs, Whitaker, Holyfield), Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza.

Feb. 1985: Showdown: Page Clobbers Coetzee For WBA Title. Plus: Larry Holmes, lightweights, Cooney-Chaplin, McCallum-Minchillo.

April 1985: Special Hagler-Hearns Program. Plus: British fighters, Hector Camacho, Donald Curry, Sonny Liston.

May 1985: The Rematch In Reno: Bramble-Mancini Color Action. Plus: Donald Curry, Aaron Pryor, McGuigan-LaPorte.

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July 1985: Marvelous Marvin! Are There Any More Mountains To Climb? Plus: Chavez, Tyson, Tubbs, Sullivan, great first rounds.

Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

Sept. 1985: Barry McGuigan: Can He Be Boxing's Savior? Plus: Truth Williams, Tyrell Biggs, Greg Richardson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Paul-Blake, Witherspoon-Bonecrusher, Berbick-Bey, Pinklon Thomas.

Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

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Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

Feb. 1986: Mike Tyson: The Legacy Of Cus D'Amato. Plus: Rocky IV, Curry-McCrory, Teddy Mann, Kenny Lane.

March 1986 (Awards Issue): Co-Fighters Of The Year: Marvelous Marvin Hagler & Donald Curry. Plus: Ring's Annual Awards, Evander Holyfield, Williamson-Muhammad, Camacho-Roach, 1985 boxing diary.

April 1986: Witherspoon Tames Tubbs For WBA Title. Plus: Dream fights, Greg Haugen, Tyrell Biggs, Mark Breland, Paul Gonzales, HBO tourney, Witherspoon-Tubbs, Frank Warren, Gene Tunney.

May 1986: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Hearns-Shuler, Mike Tyson, Bramble-Crawley, Sandoval-Canizales, Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Arguello-Costello, Weaver-Williams.

June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

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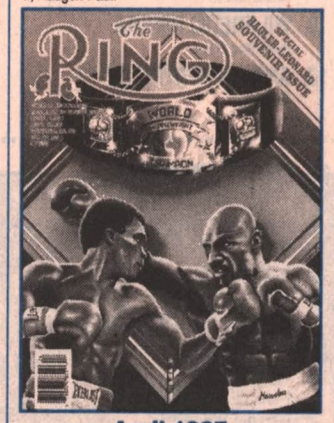
Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.



April 1987

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Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Rocky Lockridge & Roger Mayweather, Panama, Tony Burton, Chavez-Rosario, Gervacio-Espinoza, Vaca-Honeyghan.

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Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

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Pascua, Tony Canzoneri.

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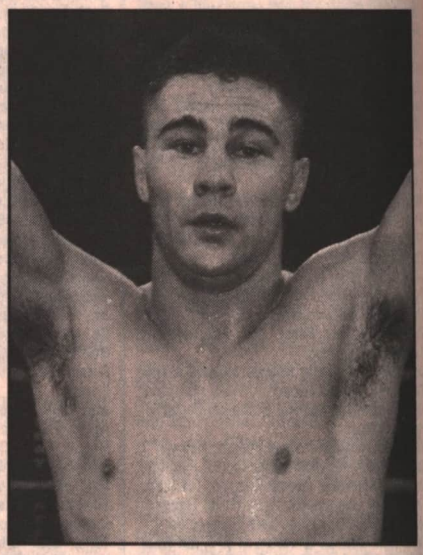
NEW FACES

ROBBIE PEDEN

Junior Lightweight

By Joe Santoliquito



A boxer, according to Robbie Peden, has to be somewhat quirky in order to engage in such a dangerous sport. The two-time Olympian happens to possess one distinct oddity, in the form of an unusual goal that could be more risky than pursuing the junior lightweight title: riding a bull. Talk about your crazy ideas.

That's not the only thing that's unique about the 24-year-old from Brisbane, Australia. His right hand is like a "nula-nula," said Peden, which is Aborigine for "big stick." Peden is one of the brightest young boxers in the Main Events stable, and if you ever want to see Lou Duva do a backflip, try telling him that one of his top fighters would like to risk life and limb riding a bull.

"I'd really like to try it one day, ride a bull, just for the adrenaline rush," Peden said, laughing as he spoke in his rapid-fire, thick Australian brogue. "It's something I'd really like to do, but I'm afraid my parents won't let me back home again if I did. I've never been afraid of anyone or anything, except my parents. Besides, I think all boxers have a touch of madness in them. They all have to have a little craziness."

Through his first six professional fights, the 5'7", 130-pound Peden had a 6-0 record and four knockouts, and is making a bullrush toward the national rankings. He fought through a serious hand injury, and feels he'll be in line for a title shot, if not late this year, then definitely in early-1999. So far, the biggest challenge Peden has faced in his brief pro career is recovering from the injury, suffered during a three-round knockout of Wilson Spann last April when he hit Spann on top of his head.

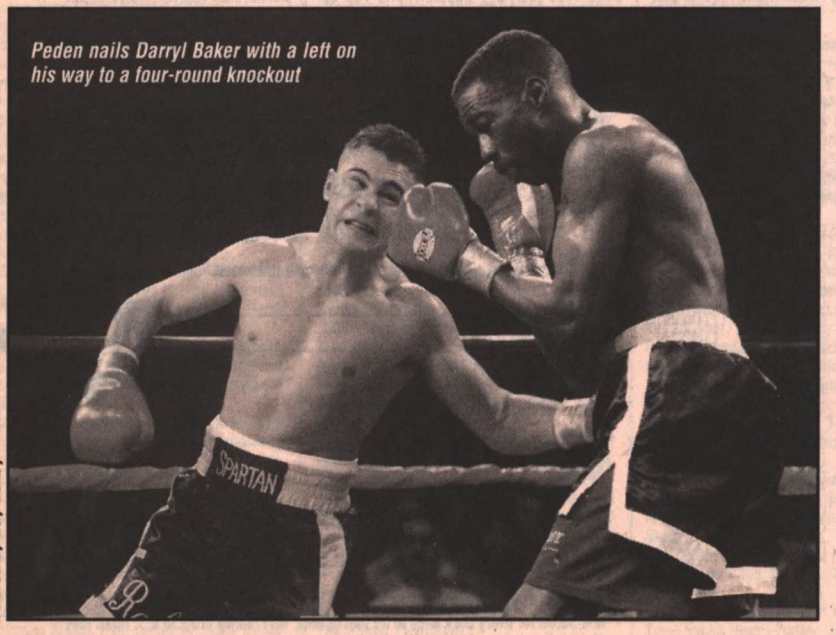
Peden, nicknamed "The Bomber," was inactive for seven months because of the fractured right hand that required surgery.

(Continued on page 62)

PRO RECORD

1996		
Dec. 21	Rolando Durant, Uncasville, CT	W 4
1997		
Jan. 24	Jose Colon, Atlantic City	KO 1
Feb. 22	Ray Mendez, Atlantic City	KO 2
April 5	Wilson Spann, Atlantic City	KO 3
Nov. 4	Jesse Gutierrez, Tunica, MS	W 4
Dec. 13	Darryl Baker, Ledyard, CT	KO 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DREW	KOs
6	6	0	0	4



Peden nails Darryl Baker with a left on his way to a four-round knockout

Photos by Ray Bailey

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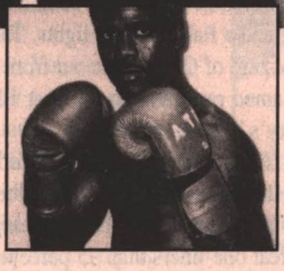

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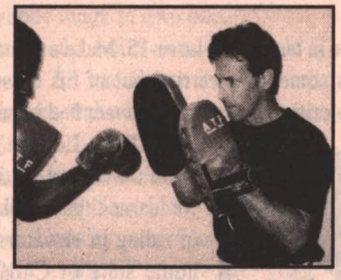

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RYAN
OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

GRANT THEM ASYLUM

Naseem Hamed told us he was better than Willie Pep, but after seeing The Artist Currently Known as Prince have to overcome three embarrassing knockdowns before halting Kevin Kelley, one is compelled to ask His Highness, "Better at what, exactly? Canasta?" Until he lives up to all the expectations a six-fight HBO contract and all those billboards created, Hamed ought to advertise himself as what he truly is: not one of the all-time great featherweights, but one of the all-time great crackpots.

The leopard-spotted trunks, hands-at-the-waist style, and somersault over the top rope would have been enough for us to conclude "The Prince" had a few jewels missing from his scepter. But all of that followed a prolonged dance routine performed behind an illuminated curtain and a walk to the ring through a cloud of smoke and a flash of laser lights. Talk about hype. There wasn't that much of a buildup waiting for The Wizard of Oz to come out from behind *his* curtain.

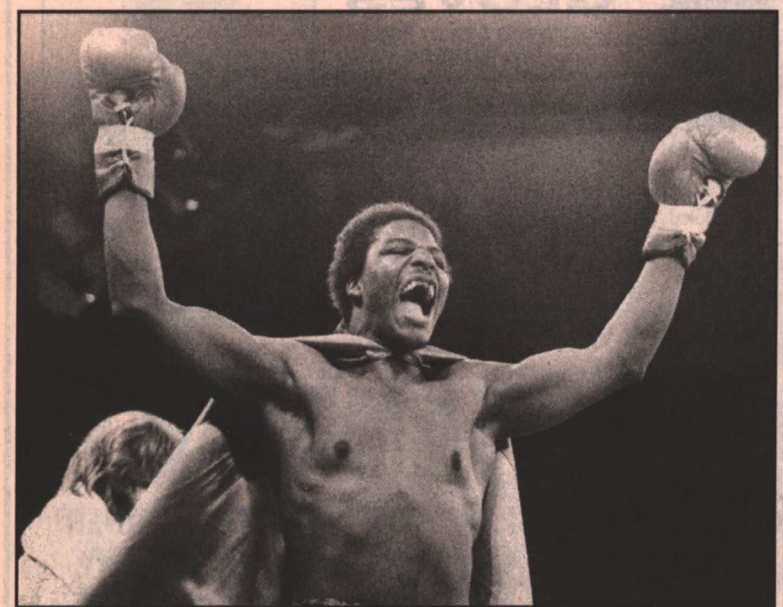
It's far too early to tell where Hamed rates among the best 126-pounders, but we can already tell how he sizes up among the history's biggest screwballs.

In descending order, here are the 10 nuttiest fighters of my lifetime:

10. Tex Cobb: The bar-brawling Texan never dressed like Liberace or performed backflips, but his jar of barbecue sauce was always a few spoonfuls short of being full. The second most quotable heavyweight of all-time had more great one-liners than 95 percent of the writers who ever covered him.

My favorite: "Make a mistake in tennis, it's Love-15. Make a mistake in boxing, and it's your ass."

9. Vampire Johnson: Was sometimes carried out of his dressing room in a coffin, cleverly short-circuiting any attempts by critics to say his *opponent* had been found in a graveyard.



The coffin opens up and out comes Johnson, surely one of the nuttiest men ever to climb through the ropes. With his two front teeth missing, creating the impression of fangs, the "Vampire" character was a natural for this 1980s middleweight.

8. Tony Lopez: The first clue that "The Tiger" wasn't wrapped as tightly as his hands came when we learned that he likes to bungee jump, but is afraid of riding in elevators. He didn't fight outside of his home state of California or neighboring Nevada until his 45th career bout and once told me, "I don't need an American Express card because I never leave home."

Most of what makes The Tiger unique has to do with his prowling for women, and it would never survive the final edit if it was recounted here. Suffice to say that Lopez plays the field with such eye-opening flair, he should be awarded a Gold Glove and voted the starting centerfielder on the National League All-Star Team.

"I'm with the girl of my dreams," he said not long ago, prompting me to ask him, "Still? Or again?"

7. Naseem Hamed: Presumably, the first three weeks of The Prince's training camp are dedicated just to getting him in shape for his ring entrance.

6. Hector Camacho: Was once number one, but

has toned down his schtick in recent years.

Among his classics: stripping naked at a weigh-in after grabbing a microphone and telling the ladies in attendance that he had a surprise for them, throwing a tampon at Vinny Pazienza while calling him "a bleeder," walking around the ring during breaks in his undercards to incite the crowd, belching into the microphone during press conferences, and crying and screaming hysterically during a telephone interview with me during which he said he was Darth Vader and had previously died on a cross.

Through the years, his wardrobe has progressed—or maybe *regressed*—from leopard-spotted trunks to an Indian headdress to a flap of fabric dangling over his protective cup like a fig leaf. He hasn't fought like "The Macho Man" for years, but he still looks the part.

5. Wimpy Halstead: The least-known in this batch of mixed nuts, but a crazy man for the ages. He was managed but Pat O'Grady, the father of Sean, who conveniently erased losses from his heavyweight hypochondriac's record and once told "The Wimp": "I've given you 60 or 70 fixed fights, and you've still managed to lose four of them."

Halstead, who describes himself as "the best-looking bald man in the world, now that Yul Brenner died," appeared on *Late Night With David Letterman* and was given the quick hook after insinuating off-camera that Letterman and band leader Paul Shaffer were lovers. Worse yet, when a TV reporter once said Halstead's quotes seemed to indicate a dislike of people of color, Wimpy replied, "I don't have anything against Mexicans or blacks. I think everybody ought to own one."

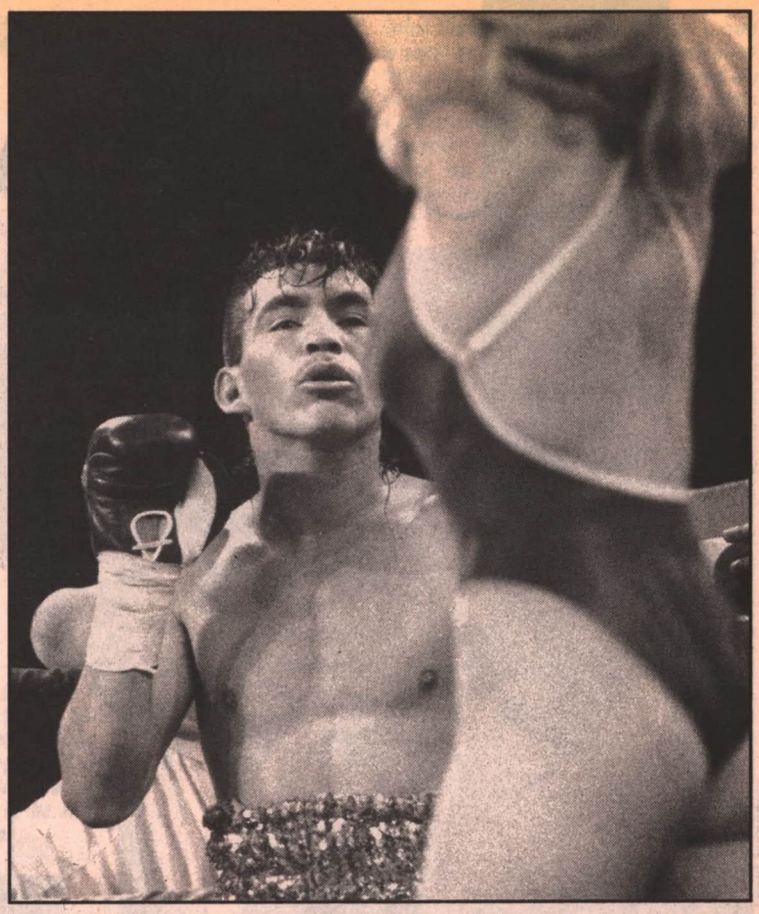
4. Livingstone Bramble: He owned a snake named Dog and a dog named Snake, said Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard had no heart, and traveled with a personal witch doctor, Dr. Doo (who, it was later revealed, was really his former basketball coach). Bramble once declared that satellites and space junk were responsible for diminished snowfall in New Jersey. And upon learning that his opponent, Tyrone Crawley, was related to cops, Bramble dedicated their 1986 fight to MOVE, the radical group that had engaged in a deadly confrontation with Philadelphia police a year earlier.

3. Joey Gamache: My Maine man is definitely missing a few claws from his lobster. For entertainment, Gamache once borrowed then-promoter Josephine Abercrombie's van and mowed down several acres of Texas cornfield before tearing off a tire and a bumper and cracking the vehicle's frame. He insisted on posing for a photo session with THE RING wearing only the WBA's jewels—the junior lightweight title belt—over his own. And he and promoter Johnny Bos have been known to run around a mall blasting novelty shop "fart spray" at unsuspecting senior citizens.

A real gas, that Gamache. Literally.

2. Vinny Pazienza: It's not day-to-day craziness that earns Paz his high ranking. It's the solid body of wacky work built up over a 15-year career. Examples:

The ring attire: It has ranged from a robe decorated with dozens of twinkling light bulbs (Paz looked like a billboard in Times Square) to a devil's horns and tail to war paint on his face.



It doesn't take much to distract Paez, who appears to be puckering up and ready to pounce during a world title fight with Louie Espinoza. You can't say the former IBF featherweight champion lets his time between rounds go to waste.

The battlefield antics: Throwing bolo punches with an exaggerated windup, illegally grabbing the ropes to facilitate an escape from trouble, putting a glove to his ear to encourage more crowd noise, and sticking out his chin repeatedly and daring the enemy to hit it.

The quotes: "When I see his legs go like spaghetti, I'm all over him like the sauce."

The excuses: The defeat to Roy Jones was blamed on coffee. Paz said he came down too soon off a caffeine high—and he wasn't kidding.

1. Jorge Paez: The winner, gloves down.

The Mexican madman's repertoire of silliness has included breakdancing on his head in ring-center, doing a celebratory handstand on the turnbuckle, grabbing and kissing a round-card girl between rounds, riding a unicycle to a weigh-in, entertaining fans in a hotel lobby by sticking push pins through his skin, wearing trunks that looked like the stage curtain in a Las Vegas showroom, having everything from an anti-drugs message to "IBF" shaved in his hair, and whacking himself in the face repeatedly before hitting his rival (a move ABC analyst Alex Wallau called a "*Three Stooges* punching combination.")

It says something about boxing's ability to attract zanies that Paez actually ran away from the circus to join the fight game. But then again, didn't P.T. Barnum once say there's a sucker for a right cross born every minute? ■

CAMERA CLICKS

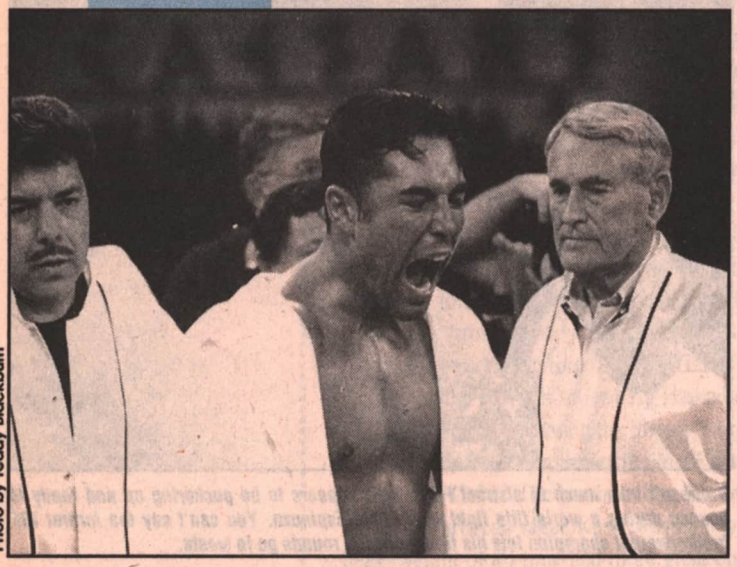


Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Ho-hum, it's just another day at the office for Oscar De La Hoya, seen here letting out a healthy yawn. It seems "The Golden Boy" could have used some more "Golden Slumbers" before stepping into the ring to face Wilfredo Rivera in December.

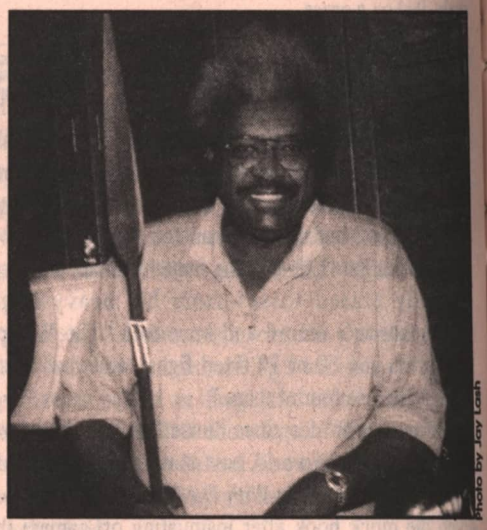


Photo by Jay Leah

"I'm gonna throw this spear up in the air, and whomever it hits gets the next shot at Holyfield!" With the Holyfield-Lewis unification bout looking unlikely to come off anytime soon, Don King's spear-chucking may be as good a technique as any for plucking a challenger from the thin heavyweight ranks.

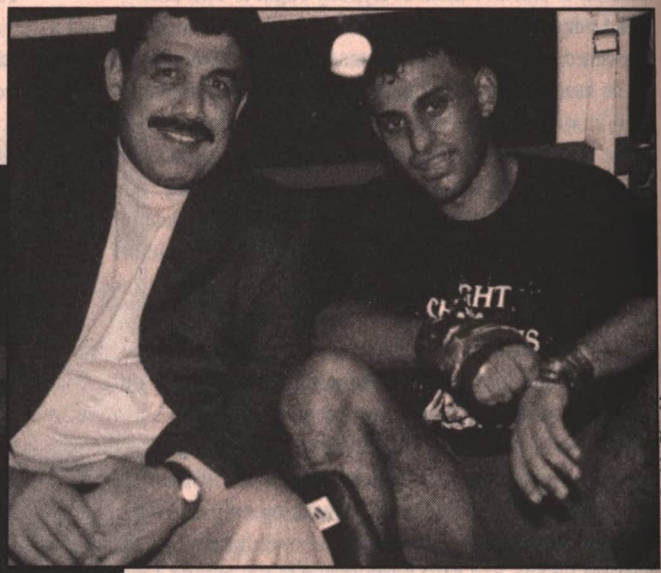


Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Mustafa Hamsho, a '70s and '80s middleweight contender of Arab descent, poses with the latest Arab sensation, featherweight Naseem Hamed. Though Hamsho never captured a world title, falling twice to then-champion Marvin Hagler in his only championship bids, he certainly has plenty of advice to impart on Naz. Word is Hamsho actually devised Hamed's Madison Square Garden ring entrance.

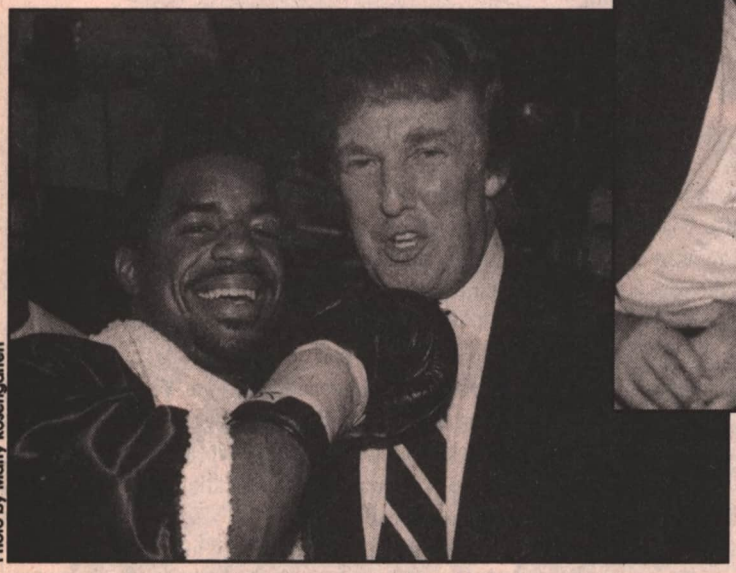


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

"The American Dream" would be Donald Trump's worst nightmare if this right hand to the chin were for real. After stopping Dan Connolly in five rounds in November, David Reid took a moment to pose with "The Donald" on his way back to the locker room.

Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Butter Claus is coming to town! Also known to some as Santa Bean, the self-proclaimed "King Of The Four-Rounders" spread his own special brand of Christmas cheer with a classroom full of children in Harlem. The Beanster may not have the long white beard, but he definitely doesn't have any trouble filling out a Santa suit.

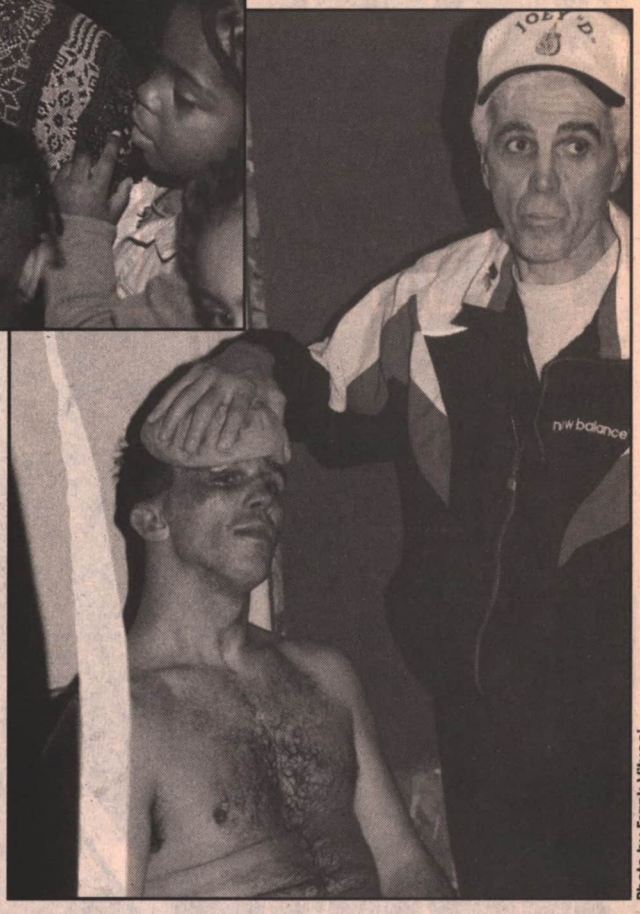


Photo by Frank Vitucci

After losing a unanimous decision to Charles Brewer in his bid for the IBF super middleweight title, Joey DeGrandis looks like he may be regretting his straight-ahead approach. Trainer Norman Stone lends a hand in the early stages of the recovery process.

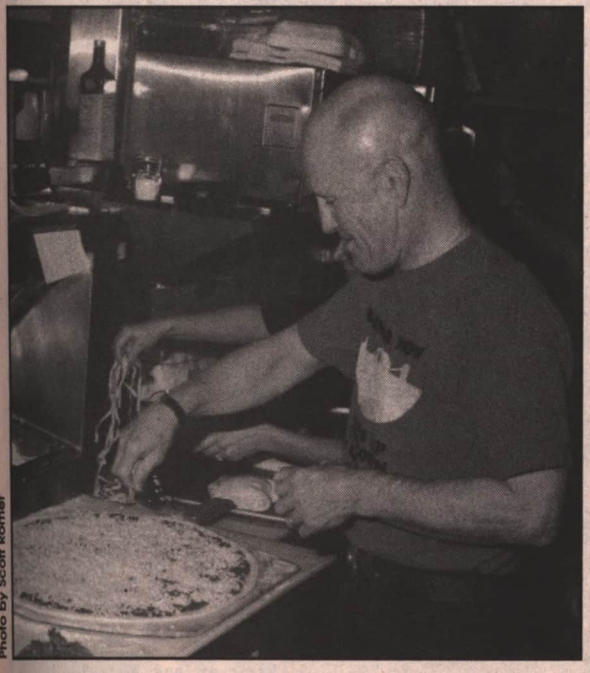


Photo by Scott Romer

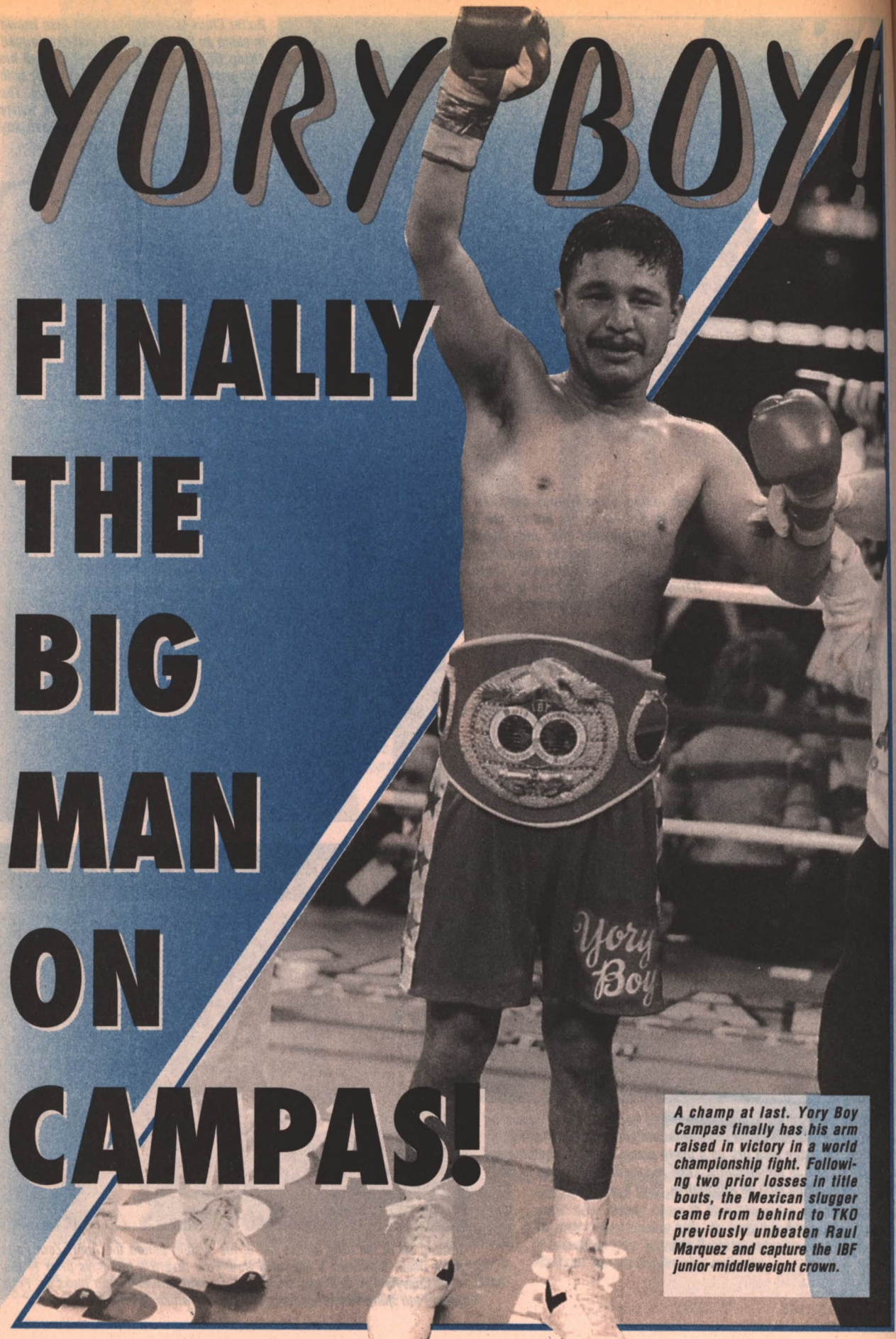
You knew he was a boxing referee, and you may have known he serves a district court judge in Nevada, but you probably didn't know that Mills Lane can also fire up a mean pizza pie. While helping out at Sonny's Pizza in Indianapolis, Lane reportedly responded to every topping suggestion with an affirmative, "Let's get it on!"

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Getting all of the dirty tactics out of his system before the fight, Zora Folley pulls Oscar Bonavena's hair at a New York tavern a few days prior to their 1965 heavyweight bout as a George Washington impersonator looks on. Folley wasn't too sharp when it came to recognizing which guy had the wig on.

YORY BOY

FINALLY THE BIG MAN ON CAMPAS!



A champ at last. Yory Boy Campas finally has his arm raised in victory in a world championship fight. Following two prior losses in title bouts, the Mexican slugger came from behind to TKO previously unbeaten Raul Marquez and capture the IBF junior middleweight crown.

Photo by Chris Farina

By Ricardo Jimenez

Luis Ramon "Yory Boy" Campas is the kind of fighter all boxing fans adore, a hard-hooking slugger who doesn't mind soaking up plenty of punishment in order to plant a couple of his own bombs. His fights are always fun to watch, but until recently it looked like the popular Mexican puncher was destined to be known as just another contender who fell short of his ultimate goal. But in December 1997, after two earlier attempts to win a title ended in defeat, Campas' dream came true. He beat previously undefeated Raul Marquez via eighth-round TKO to capture the IBF junior welterweight championship.

It's been a long, bruising climb to the championship. Campas, now 26, was only 15 years old when he traveled from his birthplace in Navojoa to Tijuana, one of Mexico's boxing hotbeds, looking to better his chances of becoming a world champion. Campas began boxing at age 11, when he followed his older brother to the local gym. The older brother used to give little Luis such a beating, he would get angry and end up chasing the bigger boy with a rock.

It was this fighting spirit that first attracted the attention of trainer Chava Mendoza, who, after only one lesson, said of Campas, "He will be a world champion some day." It was Mendoza who decided to take the young fighter to Tijuana to seek better opportunities and a chance to make money while learning his trade, which he did by fighting 34 times in a four-year period from 1988 to 1991.

"I knew that if I wanted to get better, I needed to fight, and that's what I did," said Campas.

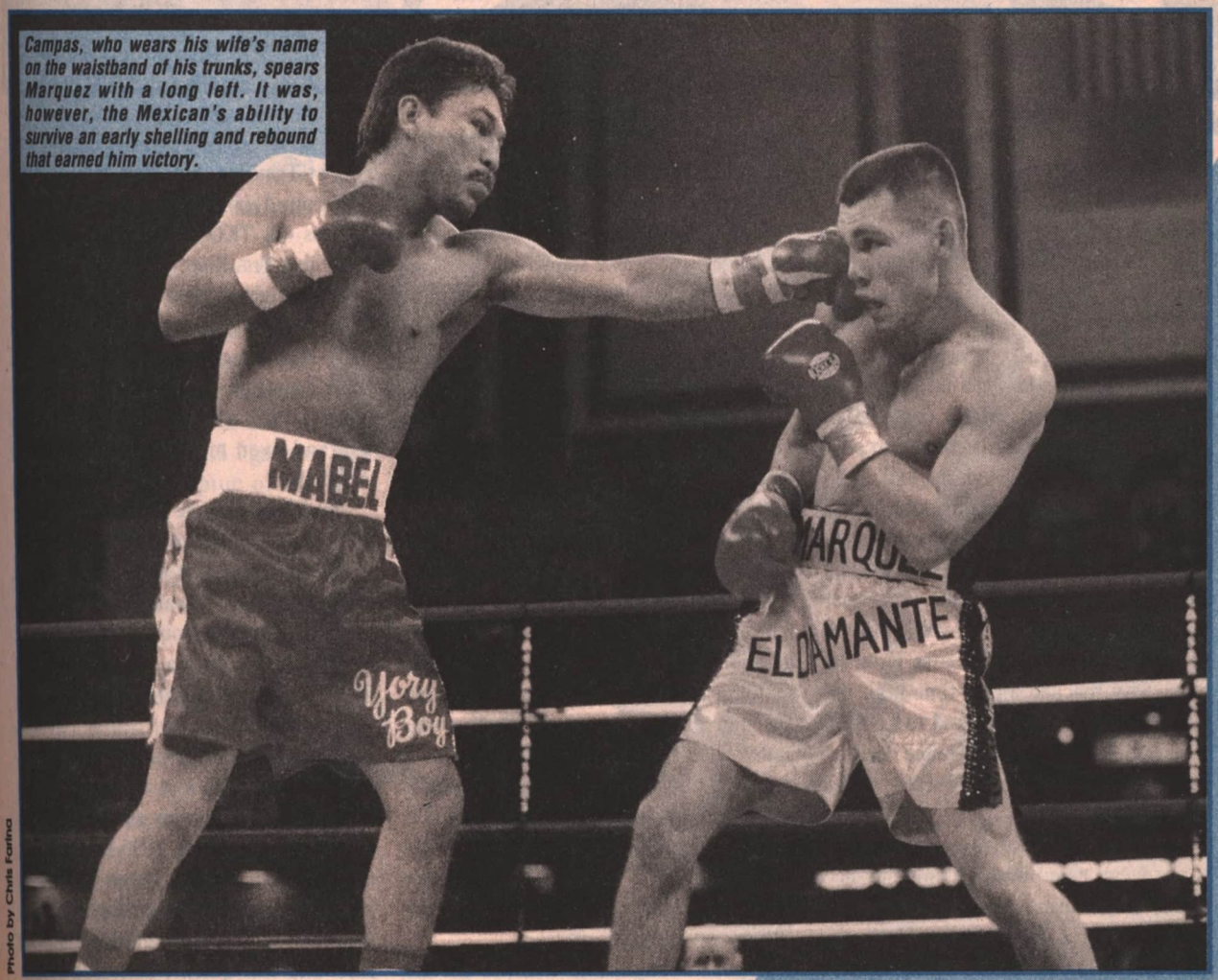
He not only fought, he won, usually by knocking out his opponent with such force that he became an instant favorite with the Tijuana fans, who are recognized as among the most knowledgeable in Mexico and are known for their undying support of their idols.

"I just like to give the people what they want. They come out to see a fighter give his all, and I do that every time I go up into ring," said Campas, who has allowed only 10 of his 71 fights to reach the final bell in compiling an overall record of 69-2 (59).

The youngest son of a railroad man and a mother who kept house for their three kids, Campas learned early to work hard and to keep his feet planted firmly on the ground. From the beginning, he fought for the people and to make his family proud.

"He's the type of person who allows people to touch him and to get close to him. Whenever you see him, he's signing autographs, chatting with people, and taking photos with little kids," said Don Chargin, who promoted a number of Campas' fights in the United Sates. "He's very humble, and the fans are his best friends. There is not one single drop of phoniness in Yory Boy."

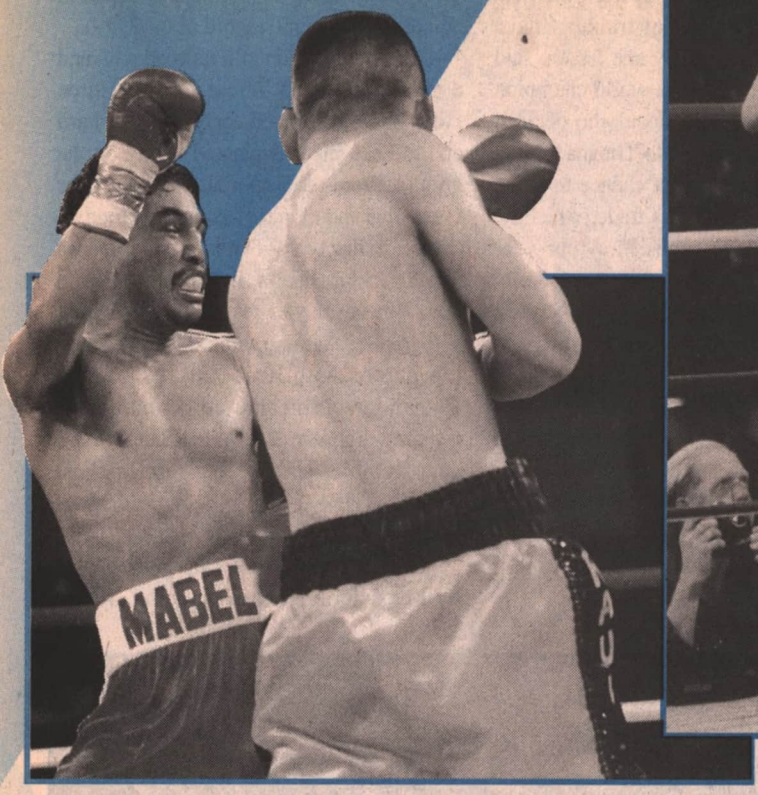
The nickname "Yory" was given to him by his schoolmates in Navojoa, where

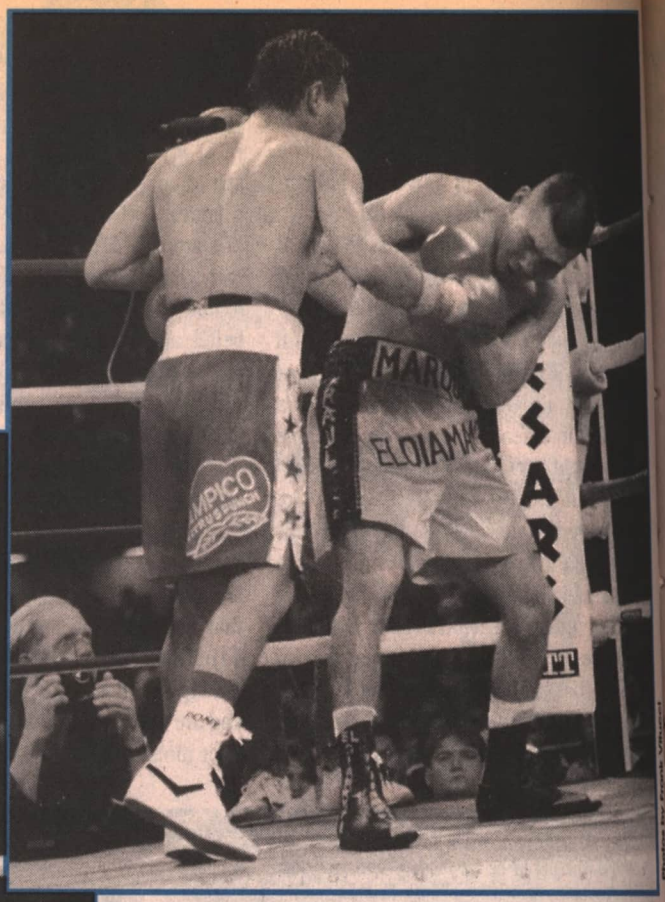


Campas, who wears his wife's name on the waistband of his trunks, spears Marquez with a long left. It was, however, the Mexican's ability to survive an early shelling and rebound that earned him victory.

Photo by Chris Farina

Marquez drilled Campas with plenty of flush shots in the early going, but couldn't finish him off (below). When Campas rallied back (right), the defending champion found himself trapped in a corner and in need of the referee's intervention.





Campas was the only non-Indian in an all-Indian school. The word comes from the Mayo Tribe and means light skin. The "Boy" part was added in Tijuana by his promoter, Guillermo Mayen. Literally translated, his name means "White Boy."

As Campas' knockout victories mounted, so did the attention and the opportunities to fight outside of his country. In Mexico, he was already becoming so popular that comparisons with his idol, Julio Cesar Chavez, were everyday occurrences. His aggressive, nonstop pressure and powerpunching landed Campas the Mexican welterweight title in '91, the same year that he made his U.S. debut with a fourth-round knockout of Frankie Davis. Campas' popularity reached an all-time high the next year, when he captured the NABF welter title by winning a 12-round decision over crafty mover Roger Turner in Las Vegas.

By then, Campas had incorporated a very special ritual into his ring entrance that included wearing an Indian headdress and being accompanied by a dancing, chanting shaman wearing the head of a deer strapped to his head. It was part of a routine that started in Tijuana after Gaspar "Indio" Ortega, the former welterweight contender who was a staple on American TV during the 1960s, presented Campas with a crest of feathers in tribute to his fighting heart.

"The headdress became a source of pride for me, and the dancing and the chanting was to show a little bit of my roots. I never thought it was a mimic, but rather a homage to a great fighter who believed in me, and the place where I grew up and still call home," explained Campas.

Soon, people started to give Campas more feathers to put in the headdress. And as he added feathers and moved up the rankings with win after win, he became every boxing organization's number-one contender. But the chance to fight for a title was not forthcoming, and it took a court order to finally get him his first title shot. It came against Puerto Rican sensation Felix "Tito" Trinidad on September 17, 1994, in Las Vegas, Nevada, with the IBF welterweight title at stake.

It took 56 fights, all wins, to get the shot at Trinidad, but after dropping the 147-pound champion in the second, Campas was TKO'd in the fourth round in a war that THE RING called "the best welterweight fight of 1994."

"I was very disappointed to lose the fight, but it was only the first loss and it wasn't enough to make me quit," said Campas. "It made me more committed to win and even more hungry to get the world title."

His life outside the ring also changed at this time, because only a few days after losing to Trinidad, Campas married the former Mabel Tizanado in one of Navojoa's most famous weddings. Since then, they've had a son also named Ramon, or as he prefers to be called, "Yorito" or "Little Yory."

Campas didn't have to wait as long to get his second crack at a title; all it took was eight straight wins and a newfound home. It was during 1995 that he first fought in Los Angeles, where he became an instant star at the legendary Olympic Auditorium. Yory Boy tallied four wins in L.A. and was quickly embraced by the

city's zealous boxing fans.

"It made me very happy to see all these people rooting for me, and to this day I consider Los Angeles a very special place to fight," said Campas.

It was in Los Angeles on October 6, 1996, that Campas got a second chance to become a champion. And while the WBO doesn't have the prestige of some of the other alphabet organizations, Jose Luis Lopez, who held its 147-pound belt at the time, is an excellent fighter with a murderous punch. Once again, Campas, who came into the fight with a broken nose, failed to win the title, getting stopped in the fifth round.

"I had a hard time making the weight for that fight, and Lopez turned out to be a better fighter that was expected," admitted Campas. "It was a devastating loss and one that had me thinking about retirement."

But a few days after the defeat, Campas went back to the gym as hungry as ever, and less than two months later he returned to action as a junior middleweight, beating Fidel "Negro" Avandeno in Tijuana.

"We decided after the fight that Yory needed to take better care of himself and be more careful about what he ate," said Horacio Jimenez, Campas' legal represenative. "That's why we hired a nutritionist to be part of our team for the first time."

After the Avandeno fight, Campas decided that his headdress and the ritual dance would be discontinued for the time being. He told his team, "I will not wear the crest again until I am champion, and the dancing will also stop until I go into the ring as the champion of the world."

In retrospect, the loss to Lopez turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Afterward, many people in the boxing community thought Yory Boy was washed-up and no longer posed a threat. Suddenly, he began receiving offers from all over the world. While it took him 56 wins to get his first shot and eight more before he got his second, his third came only four wins after his loss to Lopez, who, to add insult to injury, was stripped of the title for failing a postfight drug test.

Campas' third try came against IBF junior middleweight champion Raul Marquez, the undefeated former Olympian. Marquez had been penciled-in as a future opponent for Oscar De La Hoya, and Campas was selected as the opponent to showcase Marquez against on the De La Hoya-Hector Camacho pay-per-view card last September.

That fight, however, did not came off as scheduled. Campas suffered a sternum injury in training and had to pull out. Marquez went on to fight Keith Mullings and retain his belt on a controversial 12-round decision. As Campas watched Marquez squeak past Mullings, he knew that he would be the next challenger. What he didn't know was that it would happen so soon. Even so, by time the December 6 date with Marquez on the De La Hoya-Wilfredo Rivera card in Atlantic City rolled around, Campas was more then ready. He trained in Las Vegas under Miguel Diaz, and was better prepared, both physically and mentally, than he had ever been before.

"I knew I had to be at my very best to win and that it was probably was going to be my last chance to win a title," said Campas. "No excuses this time, no broken nose, no weight problems, it was now or never."

Campas started slowly and was forced to take numerous clean punches from the defending champion in the early rounds. But by the sixth, the challenger had done enough damage to both of Marquez' eyes that he had trouble seeing the thunderous right hands and booming left hooks that Campas was throwing. In the eighth round, Campas trapped the battered champion along the ropes and was bombing away at a defenseless target when referee James Condon stopped the carnage 2:29 into the round.

It took nearly 10 years and 71 fights, but the dream of winning a world championship finally became a reality for Campas on a cold night in Atlantic City, miles away from home, where his family and friends celebrated in front of a TV set.

"I was ready to win the belt and I needed to win it," said Campas. "I did not want to be know as a good fighter who never was a champion. It's a great feeling to finally be a champion."

(Continued on page 64)

Now that he's champion, Campas will resume the ritual of having a shaman enter the ring with him prior to his fights. It had become a popular part of the slugger's prefight ceremony, but after losing to Jose Luis Lopez, he decided to drop it until he won the title.

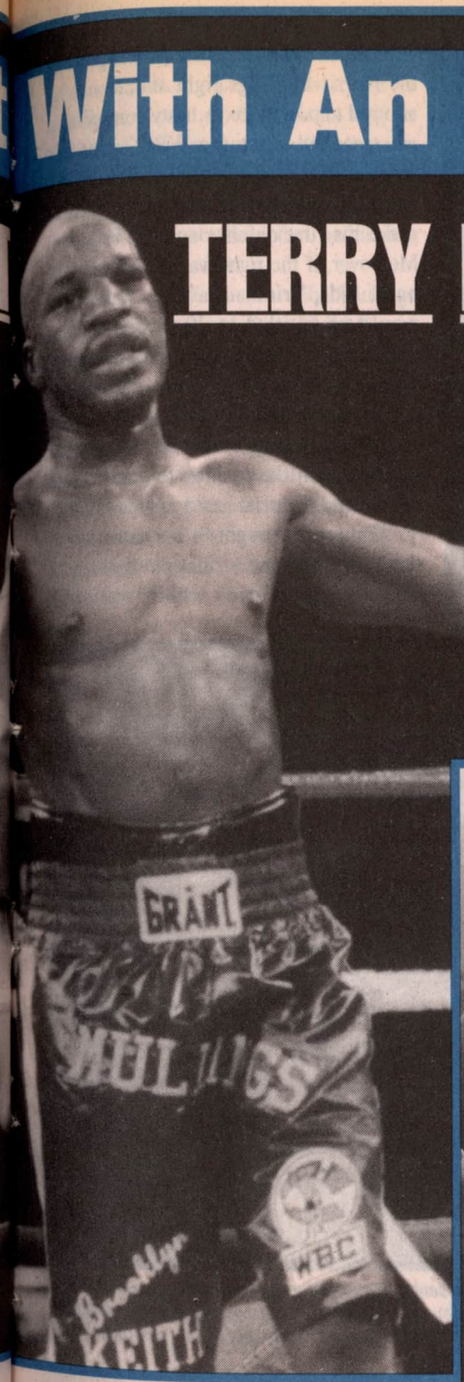
Photos by Frank Vitucci

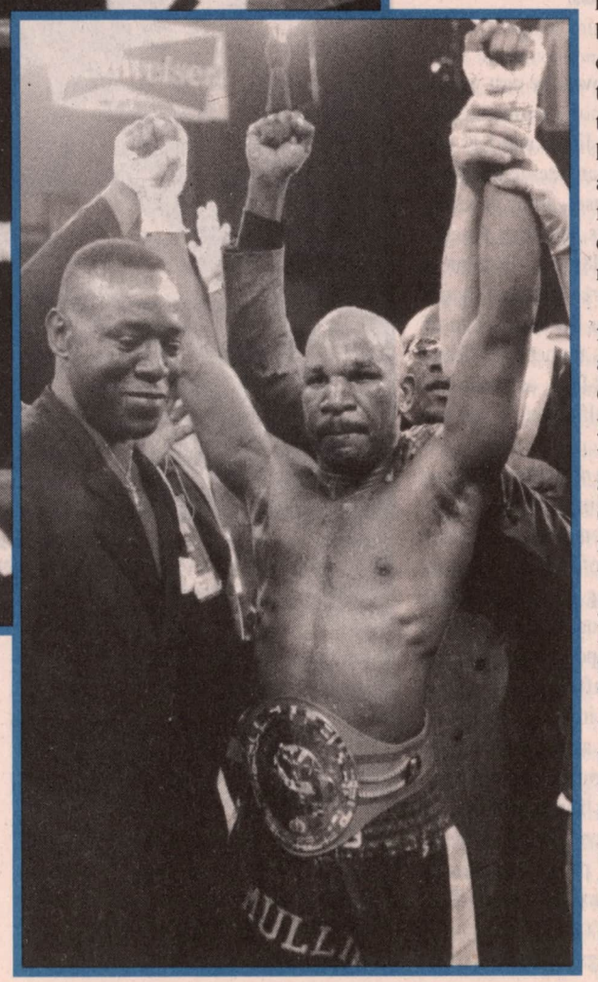
Following His Upset With An Upset

KEITH MULLINGS KNOCKS OUT TERRY NORRIS!

Photos by Frank Vitucci

When referee Tony Perez ruled that Norris had taken enough punishment, Mullings became a world champion in just his 20th professional fight. The Brooklyn native floored Norris with a fierce right hand in the eighth, then forced the stoppage with a barrage of lefts and rights to the jaw early in the ninth.





By Robert Mladinich

Less than a month before winning the WBC super welterweight title from Terry Norris on December 6, Keith Mullings held a press conference at Peter Luger's Steakhouse in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The restaurant, a few miles removed from the Flatbush neighborhood where Mullings grew up, is over 100 years old and sits like a culinary oasis in a neighborhood that has seen much better days. Even though it is a bridge apart from the glitz and glamour of Manhattan, not a day goes by that Luger's is not packed with customers. Although Mullings now resides in Fayetteville, North Carolina, like the venerable steak house, he still considers himself Brooklyn through and through, and could not think of a more fitting venue to announce his second attempt at a world championship.

It did not seem to bother him at all that his opponent would be Terry Norris, who had engaged in more world title fights than Mullings had professional bouts. Nor did it matter that he was a 10-1 underdog, even though he had thoroughly beaten IBF junior middleweight champion Raul Marquez, only to be robbed of the decision. There was a small gaggle of press in attendance at Luger's, as well as Brooklyn borough president Howard Golden. At one point Mullings leaned over and told Golden that no matter what, he was bringing the title back to Brooklyn.

"I knew Keith had the right stuff," Golden said a few weeks after Mullings stopped Norris in the ninth round. "After all, he is from Brooklyn. I just could not understand how they made a guy from Brooklyn a 10-1 underdog. That doesn't make any sense at all."

On the undercard of the Oscar De La Hoya-Wilfredo Rivera fight, Mullings and Norris engaged in a fierce battle of attrition that, in the early going at least, looked like it would end in Norris' favor. Although the fight was spirited and competitive, it appeared that Norris had not made a miscalculation in selecting Mullings as his warmup opponent for the $4.5-million payday he was expected to make against De La Hoya in the spring. Mullings was supposed to provide nothing more than a warm body on which Norris could display his dazzling boxing skills and vaunted power in order to hype the De La Hoya fight.

In the eighth round, however, Norris found out what Mullings and Golden already knew: that he made a grave error in selecting Mullings as his opponent. A straight right to the defending champion's chin deposited him on the canvas with 45 seconds left in the round. Norris managed to get himself together, but a vicious two-fisted assault by Mullings in the ninth left him beaten, bloodied, battered, and helpless only 51 seconds into the round. After a relatively short career that had been marred by adversity, Mullings found himself crowned a most unlikely new champion.

"It might sound funny, but I never had any doubt about the outcome," said the 29-year-old Mullings, whose record stands at a deceptive 15-4-1 (10). "I've been fighting uphill battles my whole life. When I graduated from James Madison High School in 1986, I barely had a 70 average, but was voted the most likely to succeed. Back then, other people saw things in me that I didn't. Now I see those qualities and realize there is nothing I can't accomplish in boxing or in any other

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Norris controlled the first half of the fight, winning all of the first four rounds on two judges' scorecards. But Mullings took the defending WBC champ's best shots and, when Norris ran out of gas in the later rounds, capitalized on the soon-to-be ex-champion's mistakes.

thing I choose to do."

What he has done over the past year is amazing in itself. Since October 1996, Mullings has lost four fights and had one no-contest caused by an accidental first-round headbutt. The losses, all by decision, came to Darrell Woods, Anthony Joseph, Tony Marshall, and Marquez. By almost any standard of measure, Mullings should have found himself on the trash heap of broken dreams. But his tremendous determination, devotion, and faith, as well as an inordinate amount of self-belief, would not allow that to happen.

There is no shortage of fighters who are very capable of handling life inside the ropes but are at an extreme loss when handling the complexities of life outside of it, especially when boxing politics are concerned. Mullings is not one of them.

"I have a lot of patience, but I admit my patience was tested after the Marquez fight," he said. "Maybe it was a blessing in disguise. I got to fight and beat Norris, a much better-known champion. Things happen for a reason, maybe that was it."

Just prior to his monumental upset victory over Norris, Mullings' patience and mettle were again tested by boxing politics. The fight, in fact, almost didn't take place.

According to Mullings' manager, Arnie Rosenthal, Norris had not made a mandatory defense in close to two years, and promoter Don King, from whom Norris had recently departed in less than amicable fashion, had hoped to match IBF welterweight titlist Felix Trinidad with him. Trinidad had been deemed the top challenger after beating Troy Waters in August. Waters was a replacement for Norris, who bowed out after a contract dispute with King.

King protested to the WBC that Trinidad was the rightful challenger and the Norris-Mullings fight should not be allowed to take place. A hasty compromise was reached when the WBC agreed to sanction the Norris-Mullings fight if the challenger, assuming he won, agreed to make his first defense against Trinidad. Moreover, if the fight was forced to go to purse bids, Trinidad, as the challenger, would be entitled to 70 percent of the purse, while Mullings, as the champion, would only get 30 percent! Rosenthal defended the signing of the agreement as the price of getting a title shot and putting themselves in the position to garner more respect and financial leeway in the future.

"This was brought to our attention at the 11th hour, and at that point our goal was to get a title, which we did," Rosenthal explained. "There is no application of this agreement if the fight does not go to purse bids or if Trinidad opts to fight someone else. If Trinidad doesn't press the mandatory, it all means nothing."

To the uninitiated, it might seem that Mullings even talking about mandatory defenses is outrageous, considering his relative lack of experience and mediocre record. To Rosenthal, however, it is not outrageous at all.

Photo by Robert Mladinich

Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden presented Mullings (accompanied by his wife Ruthie) with a citation acknowledging him as an exemplary role model. It's hard to top the adversity Mullings encountered in losing four of six fights prior to beating Norris, but his perseverance paid off in the form of the WBC super welterweight title.

"The fact is that three out four of his losses were by split decision, most of his fights were taken on short notice, and he was fighting very good opponents early in his career," the manager said. "I've been in this business a long time and always knew Keith was capable of being a champion. I never had any doubt about that, and thankfully Keith didn't either."

On short notice this past July, Mullings beat heavily favored Donald Stokes in Moline, Illinois. Stokes was 39-1-1 coming into the fight, but was decisively beaten by a committed Mullings. Afterward, Roger Levitt, a British businessman, joined managerial forces with Rosenthal, and they set up the bout with Marquez in September.

"I called on my own experience in accepting the Stokes fight," said Rosenthal. "I knew that fight would really boost his career. Things worked out because in his very next fight he beat a world champion [Marquez], although he didn't get the decision."

Rosenthal also had no trepidation about accepting the Marquez fight, another calculation that proved to be a good one. "I had Skipper Kelp [whom Rosenthal managed] in with Marquez and he gave him hell," the manager said. "I knew Marquez wasn't all he was cracked up to be. On paper, Keith looked to be a cakewalk for Marquez, having three losses in his last four fights. Even though Keith got only two weeks notice for that fight, he was training hard for Robert McCracken. There was no way we were turning a title opportunity down."

Even though Mullings lost the fight, he won the battle for credibility that enabled him to get the bout with Norris.

"After losing to Marquez everybody was calling me the real champ and encouraging me to keep going," said Mullings. "I never felt like a loser, not even for a minute. It just made me more committed to do better next time, and not leave anything to the judges."

He was given two months notice to fight Norris, a prospect that thrilled him and his management. "After the way he looked against Marquez, I want to applaud Bob Arum and Terry Norris for even agreeing to fight him," said Rosenthal. "I knew that with two months to train, Keith would be 20 to 25 percent better than he was in the Marquez fight. And that would enable him to beat any junior middleweight in the world."

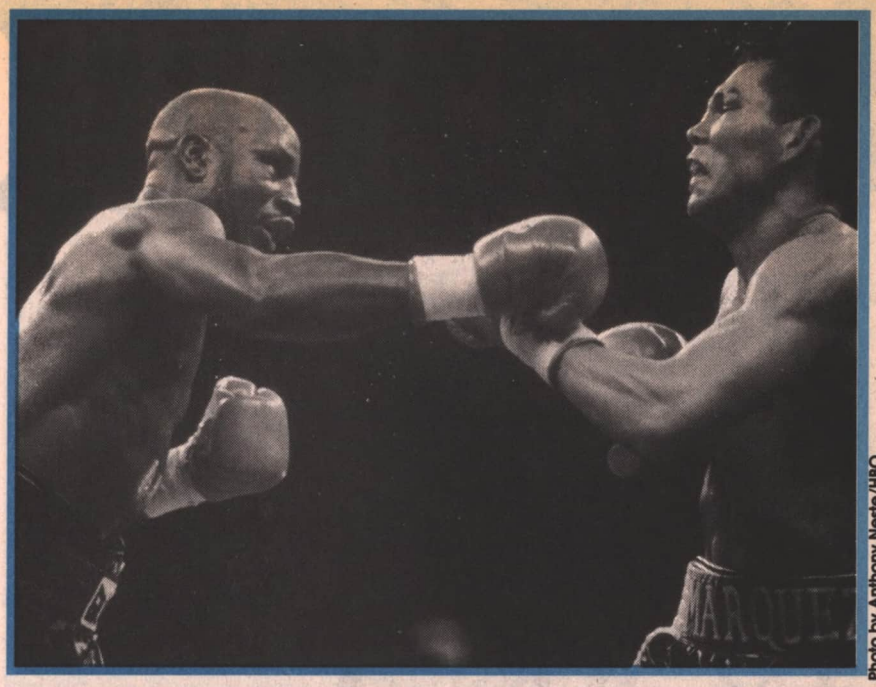


Photo by Anthony Nesle/HBO

Mullings should have become a champion in September of '97 when he pounded Marquez, but the Las Vegas judges inexplicably scored in favor of the IBF champion. It was because of his strong showing against Marquez, however, that Norris granted Mullings a shot at the WBC belt, feeling the Vegas robbery merited Mullings a second chance.

Oddly, Mullings learned how to fight only after joining the Army at age 22 in order to be eligible for the G.I. Bill. He had dropped out of Brooklyn College, where he was studying business and law with an English minor, and had hoped to return to school someday more financially secure. Stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, he found more than he could ever have imagined. Besides taking up boxing, he met his future wife, Ruthie, a now-retired Army medical specialist. Between them they have five children.

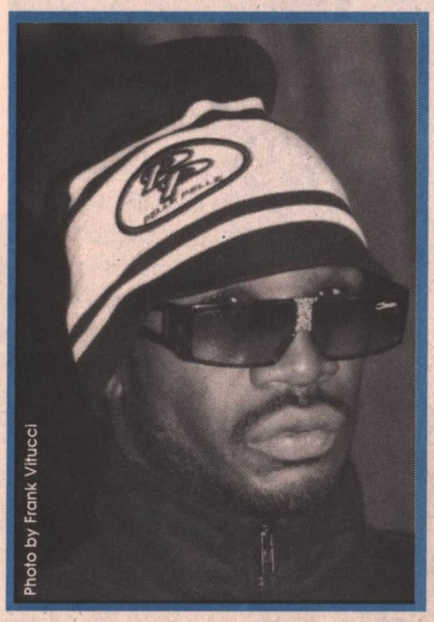


Photo by Frank Vitucci

At the postfight press conference, Mullings barely had a chance to savor his upset win before talk turned to his mandatory defense against undefeated Felix Trinidad. Another possibility for Mullings in 1998 would be to replace Norris and drop down to 147 to challenge Oscar De La Hoya.

Mullings quickly became a star on the Army boxing team and was considered a likely prospect to make the 1992 Olympic team. Instead, he found himself thousands of miles from home in the Middle East, serving as an artillery man during Desert Storm. While he did see plenty of action, he also spent months doing nothing but waiting for that action.

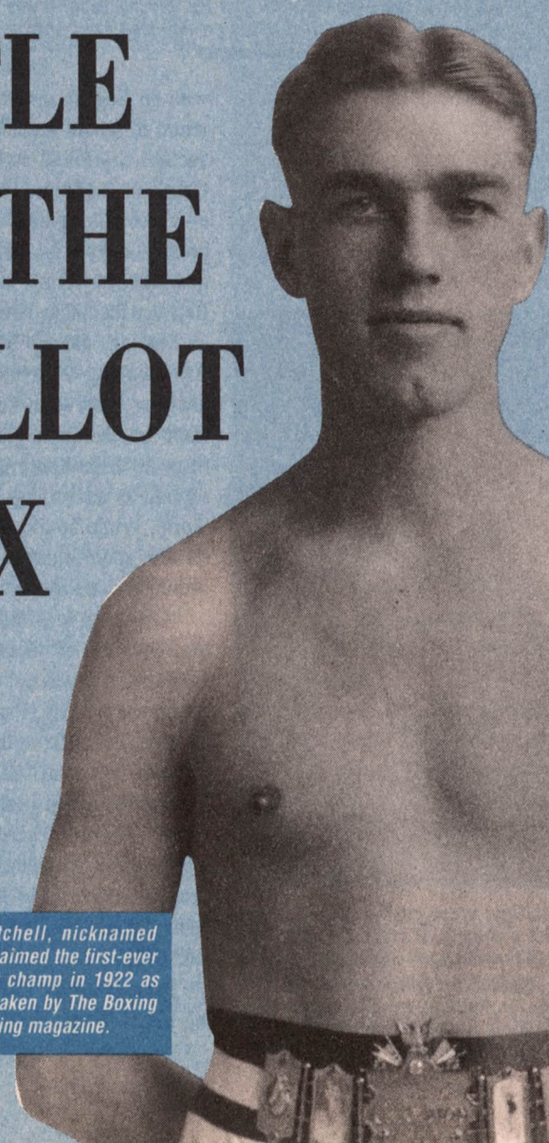
"It was a real test of endurance," Mullings said of his nine months in Iraq. "The hard part was not the fighting, but the sitting and waiting. I spent five months in the sand. For as far as the eye could see, all you saw was sand. And the food? It was terrible. You can literally use the word 'sand'-wich in describing it. I have no regrets about going there, but it definitely uprooted any chances for the Olympics or being recognized at the international amateur level."

The only laurels Mullings did garner during his 37-2 amateur career was an Inter-

(Continued on page 64)

PINKEY MITCHELL

THE ONLY FIGHTER TO WIN A TITLE AT THE BALLOT BOX



Myron Herbert Mitchell, nicknamed "Pinkey," was proclaimed the first-ever junior welterweight champ in 1922 as the result of a poll taken by The Boxing Blade, a weekly boxing magazine.

By Pete Ehrmann

It was not only the longest world championship contest in boxing history, lasting five months, but also the only one in which not a single blow was exchanged. The only one who so much as broke a sweat was the mailman delivering the ballots that determined who was crowned boxing's inaugural junior welterweight champion.

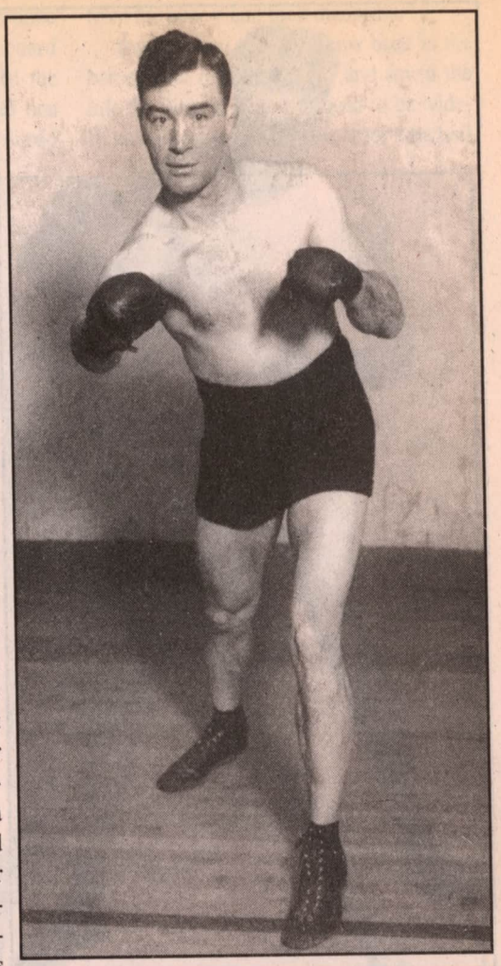
The winner of the only election ever held to choose a boxing titlist was Myron Herbert Mitchell of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. But the election was an even bigger boon to a 16-page boxing magazine printed weekly on Roaring '20s-style pink paper in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by a manager/promoter/editor who would probably, if he were around today, tell everyone hankering for the old days of just eight weight classes with one champion apiece to stop interfering with people's rights to think big and make a buck.

Mike Collins didn't invent the 140-pound championship 76 years ago. But the onetime salesman took the recommendation of the fledgling National Boxing Association in 1921 for junior weight divisions underneath each of the eight majors and parlayed it into a marketing bonanza for his magazine *The Boxing Blade*, which, in addition to ring news, columns, and results, contained advertisements for "REAL ART PHOTOS, BATHING BEAUTIES, MOTION PICTURE STARS," French postcards, sex manuals, and products such as "Make-Nu," a "home treatment that restores manhood and sexual vigor to weak, nervous men."

Collins was the manager of such notable boxers as giant Fred Fulton, "The Minnesota Plasterer," for whom he had even claimed the heavyweight title in 1916 on the grounds that then-champion Jess Willard was unworthy of the honor. Nobody listened then, but when Collins argued in his magazine that a junior welterweight division was necessary for boxers who were a few pounds too heavy for the 135-pound lightweight class, but not quite beefy enough to be full-fledged welterweights (147), he had the support of not only the NBA, but also of such influential media personages as New York columnist Damon Runyan.

The Fighting Mitchells, as they were known in Milwaukee, prepare to leave for their debut bouts at Madison Square Garden in 1921. Pinkey, second from the left in the coat with the fur collar, was the younger brother of lightweight contender Richie Mitchell, at center in cloth cap and coat.

A cynic could argue that the fact that the boxing stable co-managed by Collins and former middleweight contender Mike Gibbons just happened to include a handful of such in-betweeners was the real motivation behind Editor Collins' announcement, in early June of 1922, inviting subscribers to *The Boxing Blade* to send in their nominations for champion of the new 140-pound division. But it was actually even more crass than that. It normally cost $4 to receive 52 weekly issues of *The Blade*, but from June 15 through November 15, Collins said, anybody purchasing a one-week subscription at a special discount price of $2, would be entitled to cast 200 votes for the new junior welterweight champion. A new six-month subscription for $1 was good for 100 votes for the candidate of the subscriber's choice.



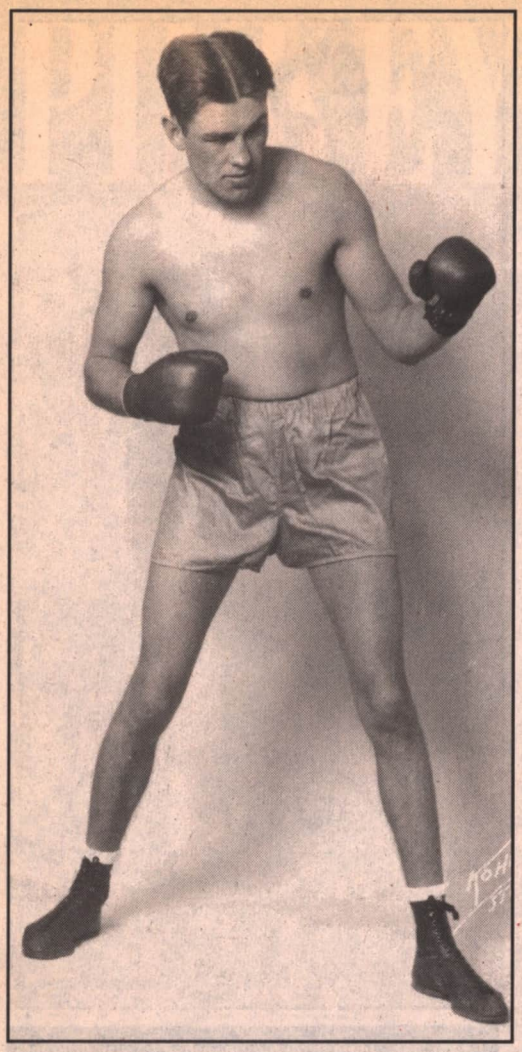
Pinkey had moments in the ring when he was brilliant. After Mitchell lost to welterweight champion Jack Britton (pictured) in 1920, Britton told reporters, "That boy should be world's champion someday."

The title that would, in time, become worth millions of dollars to such superstars as Julio Cesar Chavez and Oscar De La Hoya, started out as a gimmick to boost the circulation of a boxing magazine.

Candidates to win the "valuable diamond-studded belt emblematic of the junior welterweight championship," which *The Blade* promised to bestow on the winner, with the blessing of the NBA, came from all over the Unites States. Collins' fighters, Bud Logan of Omaha, Nebraska, and Jack Josephs, of Minneapolis, were among them. One of the first and best-known contenders to throw his hat in the ring was the aforementioned Myron Mitchell, who was known by the nickname "Pinkey," because his father had commented, upon seeing baby Myron in his crib, that "he's like a little pink rascal."

Pinkey was the younger brother of Richie Mitchell, who, on January 14, 1921, came within a second of winning the lightweight title from Benny Leonard in one of the great fights ever seen by the founder of *The Ring*, Nat Fleischer. Floored three times in the opening round, Mitchell then knocked Leonard down before the round ended, but was stopped in the sixth. Nicknamed "Richie The Lionhearted" by the Milwaukee press, the blond, handsome Mitchell was one of the best boxers ever to come out of the then-Brewing Capital of the country. He still is probably the most popular athlete ever produced in Milwaukee, thanks to an innate decency and the kind of integrity, character, and humility that are in such short supply in contemporary sports.

On top of that, Richie was always exciting to watch in the ring. Which is where he and Pinkey diverged, and why Pinkey, while as sterling a personality outside the



Infused by his new title, Mitchell, who had a tendency to clinch, lean, and maul at various stages of his career, fought with a new purpose in title defenses against Bud Logan and Johnny Tillman in 1923.

ring as his brother, ended up on the opposite end of the popularity scale from Richie in their hometown.

Pinkey was still an amateur in 1917 when no less than former lightweight champion Battling Nelson called him "the best-looking prospect I have seen in a number of years," and predicted that the 5'11" Mitchell—often referred to as "the human splinter"—would go on to become even better than his brother the lightweight contender. After Pinkey knocked out Joe Homeland in his first pro bout on November 6, 1917, the Milwaukee media heartily concurred.

But in his second fight, against Johnny Mendleson, Pinkey did so much clinching, leaning on, and mauling that he received a two-month suspension from the Wisconsin Athletic Commission, and thereby set the tone for much of the notoriety that would follow for the remainder of his career.

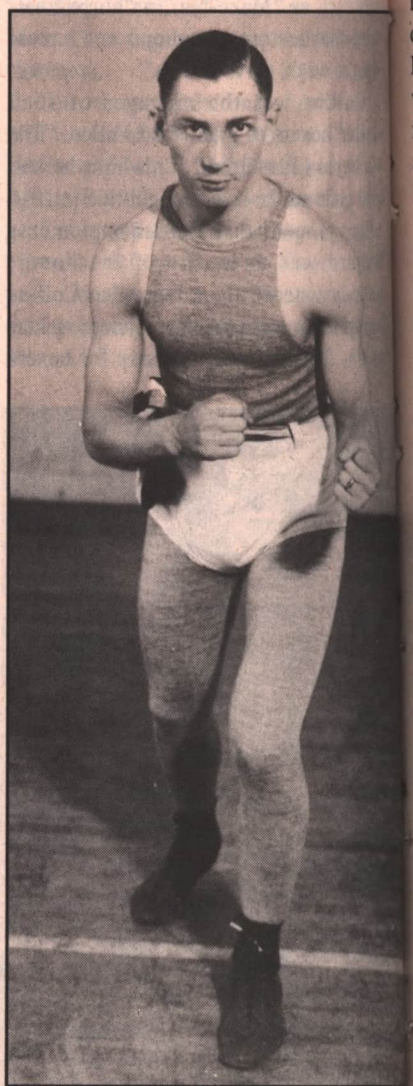
While he was capable of the kind of superb effort against lightweight contender Willie Jackson (a 15-round draw at Madison Square Garden in 1921) that moved Dodge City lawman-turned-Gotham sportswriter Bat Masterson to compare him to boxing master Packey McFarland, too often Pinkey fought in a different mode. Oddly enough, most of his lethargic performances came in front of his hometown fans, who grew so disgusted with him that Pinkey became a pariah in Milwaukee rings. But that would come after the successful campaign to make him the city's first (and still only) homegrown world champion.

Whatever public relations problems Mitchell brought upon himself, it is boxing historians who are responsible for the denigration of him contained in even the latest ring encyclopedias and histories, based mostly on misinformation. Among other things, they maintain that Pinkey's victory in the balloting for the first junior welterweight title was as surprising as a malapropism out of the mouth of Don King because Mitchell was the candidate of the man running the election. While, as mentioned earlier, Editor Collins had several boxers from his stable in the running, Mitchell wasn't one of them! Throughout his career, Pinkey and Richie—called "The Fighting Mitchells"—had only one manager, their older brother, Billy Mitchell.

Furthermore, thanks largely to Richie, a top lightweight since 1915, the Mitchell name was known and popular all over the country. And when the mood was on him, Pinkey was brilliant in his own right. While he lost the newspaper decision to welterweight champion Jack Britton in 1920, after the fight an impressed Britton told reporters, "That boy should be world's champion someday."

Except for a three-week period in July, when Eddy Fitzsimmons of New York, who'd outpointed Pinkey the year before, occupied first place in the election returns, Mitchell was the front-runner all of the way. He took over the top spot for good in early-August, with 12,600 votes to 11,700 for Fitzsimmons. After that came Detroit's aptly named Sid Barbarian, with 10,300. Moving up fast was the boxer who would eventually finish second in the voting, Harvey Thorpe, of Kansas City, Missouri.

With three weeks left in the contest, Pinkey led Thorpe, 37,400 votes to 34,200. By then, 25 candidates were on the board, including former lightweight champion Willie Ritchie, who was 16th and would not finish much higher.



Benny Leonard and Pinkey met in a classic confrontation in 1923 in Chicago. Leonard was awarded a 10-round knockout, causing a major riot in which referee Davy Miller was punched by Pinkey's brother Richie.

More than 700,000 votes had been cast when the election concluded on November 15. The winner of the junior welterweight title belt, with 100,800 votes, was under suspension in his home state at the time for excessive "holding and wrestling" in an October bout in Milwaukee against Tommy O'Brien. Nevertheless, wrote famous boxing journalist Thomas S. Andrews of Milwaukee, "Pinkey should make an ideal champion ... He is a clean-living young man, and that is 50 percent of the assets of a boxer."

Even though derided on some sports pages as a "mail order title," the junior welterweight championship infused its owner with new purpose in the ring, at least for a while. In no-decision title defenses against election runners-up Bud Logan on January 20, 1923, and just two weeks later, Johnny Tillman, Pinkey fought the way expected of a champion and, as important in Milwaukee, a Mitchell.

"The time has arrived when Richie's kid brother must be accepted as the leading Milwaukee favorite—a worthy successor to Richie," wrote Sam Levy of *The Milwaukee Journal*. "No longer is Pinkey the lethargic battler of yore. No more does he confine his evening's toil to clinching. He is a true-blue fighter—a pleasing performer. The prefix 'champion' that was tagged onto his family name several months ago was not a gift—rather a well-earned award. He actually deserves the recognition that is given other halo-wearers."

While many history books inaccurately state that he never even defended his 140-pound title, Pinkey in fact successfully put it on the line at least six times. His opponents, along with Logan and Tillman, included Thorpe, Barbarian, Bobby Harper, and Nate Goldman. Most were no-decision bouts, but newspaper accounts credited Mitchell's impressive, winning performances.

But his biggest fight in that span was a non-title bout on May 29, 1923, against the man who was a hair-shirt to The Fighting Mitchells. Lightweight champion Benny Leonard and Pinkey met in Chicago, and a major riot ensued after Leonard was awarded a knockout victory in the 10th round of what had been up until then a very close, if unexciting, bout. Pinkey insisted that referee Davy Miller—later to achieve fame as the "Long Count" referee in Dempsey-Tunney II—had let Leonard hit him while he was down. (Actually, the most shocking punch of the day was one thrown at Miller after he designated Leonard the winner. It came from, of all people, the saintly Richie).

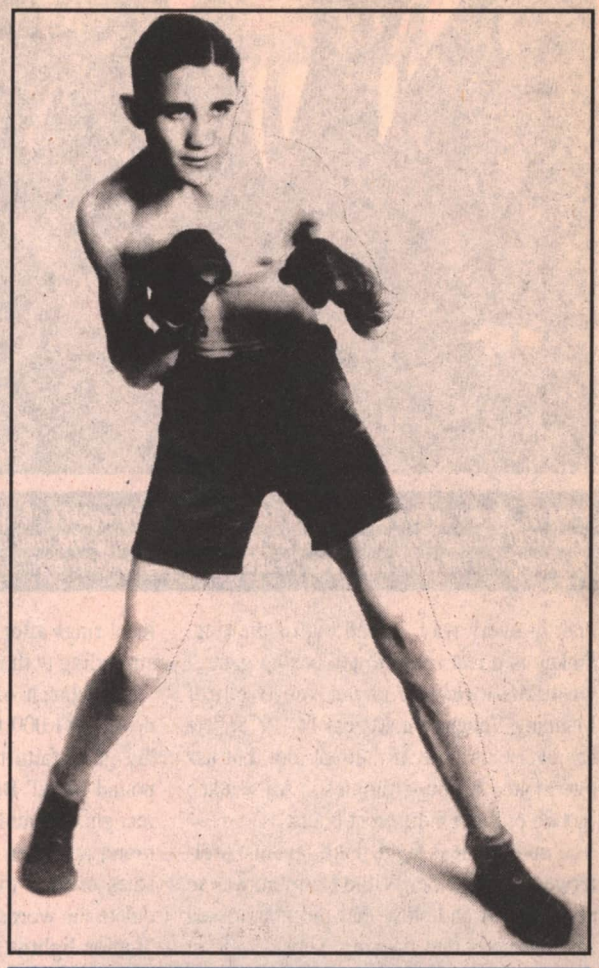
No doubt prompted by the success of its first plebiscite, that year *The Boxing Blade* got back to the election business. This time, for the cost of a new subscription, readers could vote for their favorite challengers in every weight class. Harry Wills ended up as the favorite nominee to face heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey, while the junior welterweight ballot included such familiar names as Eddy Fitzsimmons, Johnny Tillman, and Sid Barbarian (all of whom would be defeated by Pinkey), as well as a new contender named Red Herring.

Pinkey and Herring would meet in a bout as controversial as it was colorful. But first, *The Blade* attempted a surprise recall of its elected champion. In the January 19, 1924, issue, it was announced that Editor Collins "intends to make a demand for the return of the belt unless Mitchell engages in a championship battle within the very near future."

Which brings us to another singular feature of the junior welterweight division. It was the only division with its own independent governing body. After Mitchell got *The Blade's* belt, a "Junior Welterweight Commission" was appointed to oversee the new title. Chairman of the three-man panel was Judge Adelbert J. Hedding, of Milwaukee, who demonstrated that he was no Mitchell lackey by ordering Pinkey to return his belt. When Billy Mitchell, responding for Pinkey, said no, Hedding and fellow commissioner J.C. Karel resigned, citing "no cooperation from the boxers and their managers."

But Hedding was somehow back in the harness the following year, and saved the title for Pinkey, who continued to be widely recognized as champion, after Mitchell was disqualified in his March 27, 1925, bout with Herring. Pinkey knocked Herring stiff as a mackerel in the sixth round, but the referee ruled that he hit on the break and awarded the unconscious fighter the match. When he woke up, Herring claimed the 140-pound title and demanded the precious belt. Billy Mitchell sent it to Tom Andrews in Milwaukee for safekeeping, and Judge Hedding subsequently ruled that because it was a catchweights, or overweight fight, the title had not been at stake.

By then, not only did Mitchell's fighting weight—147½ pounds for Herring—make him a natural welterweight, but he was reverting more and more to old, bad habits in the ring. "A clean-cut fellow, a high-class sports-



"Mushy" Callahan ended Pinkey's three-year reign as junior welterweight champion with a 10-round decision on September 21, 1926. By that time, Pinkey reverted back to old, spoiling habits.

Pinkey, shown on the far left at a 1965 dinner in Milwaukee, was twice defeated running for sheriff of Milwaukee County after he retired from boxing. He died on March 11, 1976, and was referred to in the local papers as "a celebrated local welterweight boxer of the 1920s."

man in every way, in and out of the ring, Pinkey is a real credit to the boxing game," wrote *Milwaukee Journal* sports editor Manning Vaughn on August 14, 1925. "He has every attribute of the real idol, but has overlooked his opportunities in Milwaukee by two or three indifferent bouts."

Pinkey's next fight there, against welterweight contender Willie Harmon, was so clinch-filled and slow that the fans tossed seat cushions into the ring. Unwelcome in local rings after that, Mitchell hit the road, struggling both in the ring and on the scale.

In March of 1926, he doggedly put down a $1,000 forfeit with Judge Hedding "in good faith that he can make the 140-pound limit." But the NBA decided not to recognize a junior welterweight class anymore, and even the American press syndicates ordered their sports bureau chiefs to delete the words "junior welterweight" and "junior lightweight" (the only other subdivision then) from their copy. *The Journal* ran the story under the headline, "Mail Order House Fistic Titles Have Passed Out Of Vogue."

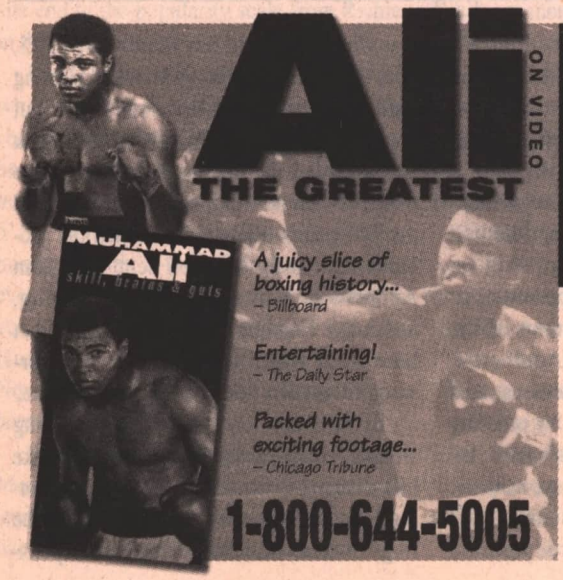
His struggle to get down to 140 was mitigated by the $10,000 guarantee Mitchell got when he lost the belt to "Mushy" Callahan on September 26, 1926. Pinkey fought on with middling results for several more years, and, after retiring from boxing, ran twice for sheriff of Milwaukee County. But the political heyday of the only elected boxing champion was past, and he lost both times.

Unlike the death of Richie Mitchell in 1949, which was front-page news in Milwaukee, the passing of the city's only native world champion on March 11, 1976, was allotted just a few paragraphs. They didn't even mention Pinkey's title; he was merely referred to as "a celebrated local welterweight boxer of the 1920s."

Probably the most accurate summation of his career was provided by Benny Leonard, when he ran into Pinkey in New York several years after their memorable dustup in Chicago. "Outside the ring, Pinkey, it's a pleasure to meet you," Leonard said. "In the ring, though, you're the most aggravating guy I ever fought."

But as any contestant in another famous voting contest knows, the "Congeniality Award" is strictly for losers. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.



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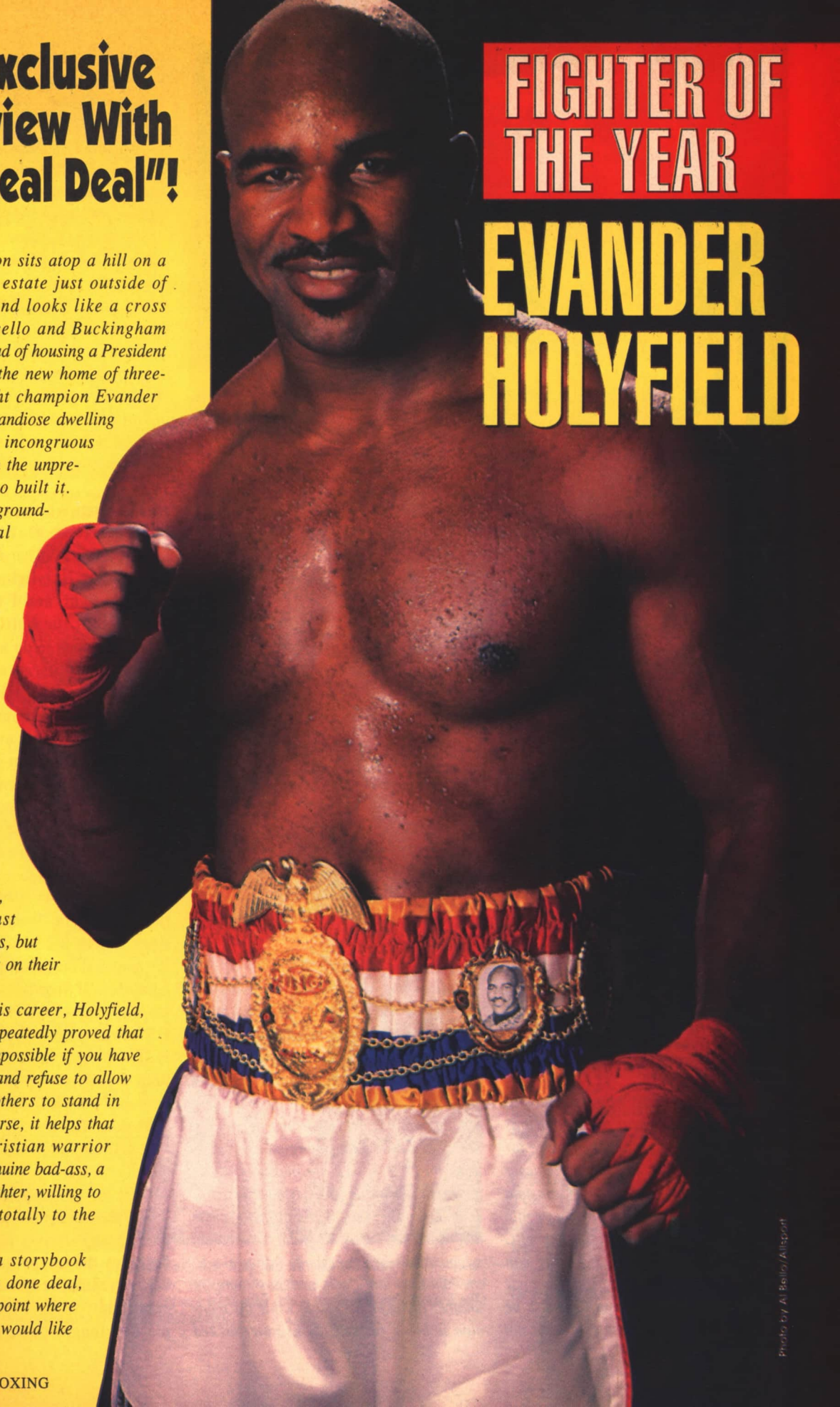
An Exclusive Interview With "The Real Deal"!

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

EVANDER HOLYFIELD



The mansion sits atop a hill on a 100-acre estate just outside of Atlanta and looks like a cross between Monticello and Buckingham Palace. But instead of housing a President or a queen, it's the new home of three-time heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield. The grandiose dwelling seems somewhat incongruous when paired with the unpretentious man who built it. For Holyfield is grounded in traditional values, admired just as much for his strength of character as for his fighting ability, and not usually given to ostentatious displays of wealth. But if ever a fighter earned the right to live in a castle on a hill, it's the knightly Holyfield, who has not just tilted at windmills, but knocked them flat on their butts.

Throughout his career, Holyfield, 35-2 (25), has repeatedly proved that few things are impossible if you have faith in yourself and refuse to allow the opinions of others to stand in your way. Of course, it helps that beneath the Christian warrior persona lies a genuine bad-ass, a savvy, ruthless fighter, willing to commit himself totally to the moment.

At 35, with a storybook career already a done deal, Holyfield is at a point where many of his fans would like

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

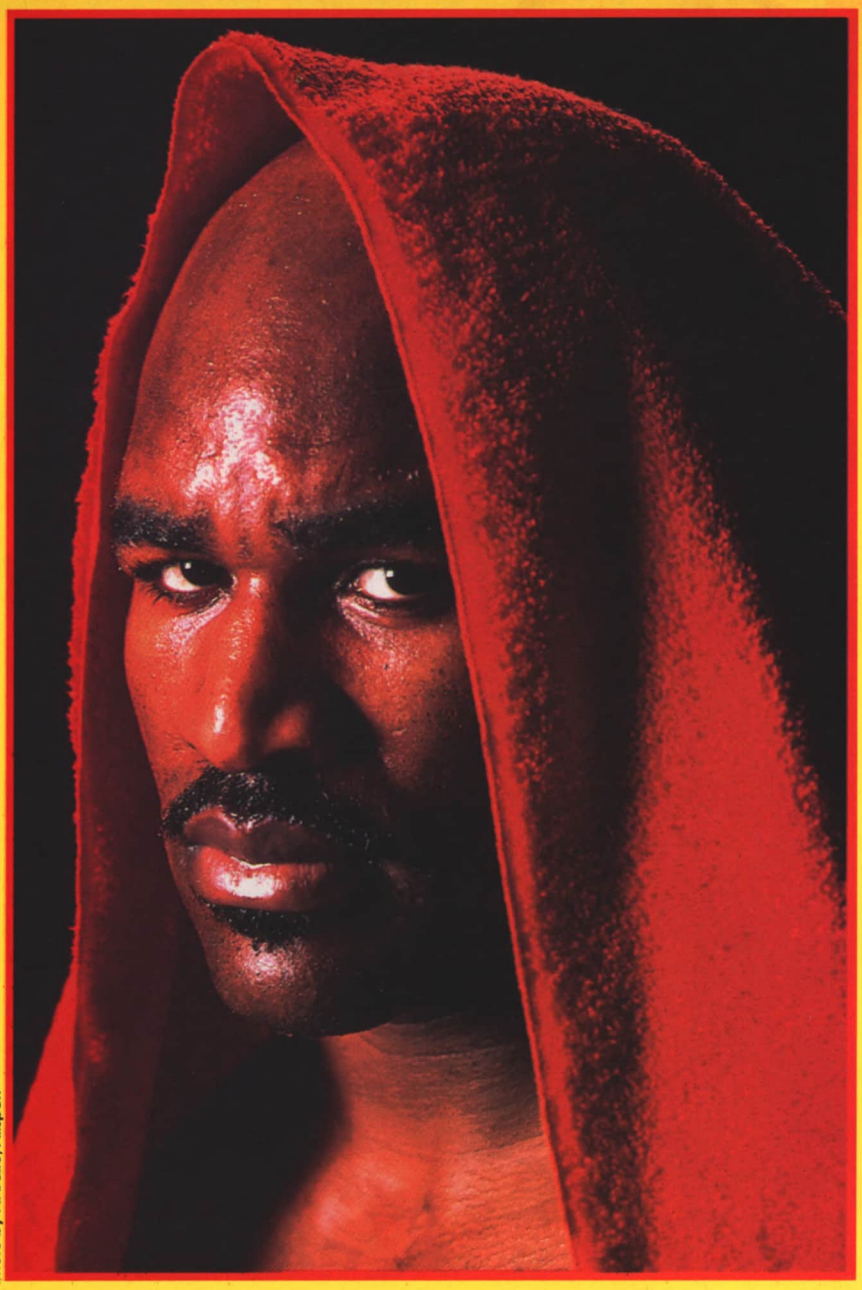


Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Holyfield moved up a few more spots on the list of all-time great heavyweights in 1997, deservedly procuring THE RING's Fighter of the Year award for the second straight time in the process. "The Real Deal's" intensity, courage, resolve, and class set him apart from all the other fine champions of the '90s.

him to retire, go out a winner. After all, he's done it all (several times) and has already punched out an exalted place for himself in boxing history. Even if he never wins another fight, a plaque at Canastota is assured. There are also many people who urgently want Holyfield to fight WBC titlist Lennox Lewis, so that boxing can have a unified heavyweight champion once again. Right now, that doesn't seem to be the most likely turn of events, at least not in the immediate future.

Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins visited Holyfield at his Fairburn, Georgia, home in late-December. For the second year in a row, Holyfield was the recipient of the magazine's Fighter of the Year award, and graciously invited THE RING to his home for an informal belt-awarding ceremony. The champ was unassuming and cooperative, patiently posing for photographs at his private gym, never uttering a word of complaint when our photographer repeatedly drenched him with water to simulate sweat. And when everybody adjourned to the house to talk (he's currently living in another home on his estate while the mansion is being furnished), Evander kicked back in his trunks and sweatshirt, and let his thoughts flow freely for almost two hours in a relaxed, downhome bull session.

Collins reports: "Although Evander is not the most eloquent boxer I've ever spoken with, what he says generally makes a lot of old-fashioned common sense. He's a walking, talking, hard-punching advocate for the power of positive thinking, a rarity who actually practices what he preaches. After packing up our gear and leaving, I asked photographer Al Bello for his impression of Holyfield. He thought it over a second or two and then said, 'Well, you know, he's kind of inspirational.' And that, more than anything else, sums up the feeling one takes away after spending time with the man now widely recognized as the finest heavyweight of his era."

The Ring: What's preventing a unification bout between you and WBC champion Lennox Lewis from happening?

Evander Holyfield: Lennox really wants to fight, and I want the fight. I believe that the battle is with HBO. Whoever wants to do a particular fight, it makes no difference. I can fight for Showtime or HBO. HBO doesn't mind giving the right amount of money if I sign to be with them over a long period of time. But not if I'm not gonna sign to be with them over a long period of time. I don't want to sign with no network. I feel that way because when something comes down and you don't win, they tell you we can't use you no more. I've been told that, but I've been able to get the title back again. So now it's a different story. I know it's all about business, and it's not good business for me to sign with a network. If Showtime wants to pay the money, they should have the show. If HBO wants to pay the money, then HBO should have the show. And because HBO has a contract with Lennox Lewis, he can't actually fight on Showtime right now.

The Ring: How important is it to you to unify the titles?

EH: What's important to me is the fact that there should be only one champion, and I do feel that each fighter deserves the opportunity to fight the best guy. Lennox Lewis hasn't had the opportunity to fight the quality of people I've fought because he's tied in a

While Tyson's bite furthered the belief that his former dominance of the heavyweight division was based largely on his intimidating presence, the June 28 rematch between him and Holyfield also served as proof that Evander's spectacular performance in their first encounter was not a fluke.

contract that prohibits him from fighting Mike Tyson or Riddick Bowe. He's still with HBO, and HBO doesn't want to give the money that the fight should generate.

The Ring: Let's just say, for discussion's sake, that you and Lewis do get together some time. A lot of experts think Lewis' size would be your biggest problem.

EH: Size don't make a difference. I have proven that by fighting big guys. Lennox Lewis is a good fighter, and his ability is the only thing that would make the fight complicated. Size don't really make a difference. But if you can't figure out a guy, then you have real problems. I was able to jab with Riddick Bowe, and I think he had more skills than any big guy I ever fought. He gave me problems because he had fast hands and a good inside fight game. Lennox Lewis has proven that he's better than the guys he's fought, but I don't think

Whereas Tyson robbed Holyfield of another knockout, Moorer turned in a courageous showing that allowed the three-time champ to display his full arsenal. After scoring five knockdowns, Holyfield finally ended the fight in the eighth to avenge his 1994 loss and unify two-thirds of the heavyweight crown.

Photo by Nasser Khan

At the time this photo was taken in December of 1993, Holyfield was the WBA and IBF champion, and Lewis held the WBC belt. Four years later, both men have those titles back and welcome a unification bout. Unfortunately, Lewis' contract with HBO and Holyfield's association with Showtime are standing in the way of the potential classic.

he'd give me any problems. My thing is not to criticize, but he hasn't fought the quality of opponents that I've fought. I feel that his reputation has been built on Razor Ruddock and Andrew Golota. Now these are two guys who came to greatness on defeats. Ruddock gave Tyson two tough fights, but he lost, and even though Golota beat Bowe up, he lost. I don't say that Lennox Lewis don't have it, because it takes a good fighter to bring the best out of another fighter,

(Continued on page 56)

NAZ'LL DAZZLE!

This Prince Rules With An Iron Fist!

Photos By Al Bello/Allsport

When Hamed floored Kelley for the third and final time, he raised his arms, not to gloat, but probably out of relief that this thrilling war was over. Despite their vastly different approaches to boxing, it was clear from their clowning around at prefight press conferences (above left) that Hamed and Kelley got along quite well. They were all business in the ring, though, as "The Flushing Flash" actually seemed to have the upper hand in the early stages of the fight (above right). Hamed's next opponent may be veteran Kennedy McKinney, who set the stage for the excitement to follow with his electrifying upset of Junior Jones in the semifinal at the Garden (bottom).

By Robert Cassidy

It has come to pass that a story written about Prince Naseem Hamed does not center entirely on boxing. Hamed, it would appear, prefers it that way because he is not just a boxer. He is an entertainer.

Perhaps that is why the boxing public in the United States has been reluctant to respect him. This sport is not about entertainers, it is about warriors. It is about the Kevin Kelleys of the world, the blue-collar fighters whose trademarks are blood and guts. Not faux-leopard trunks and somersaults over the top rope.

That is why when Hamed and Kelley met at Madison Square Garden, Kelley, a bettor's underdog, was a sentimental favorite. Hamed fostered that perception from the start, accentuating his arrogance in each prefight media event.

When Hamed stormed the Garden—the fabled mecca of boxing, with over a century of pugilistic tradition—he unveiled an entertainment package so foreign to traditionalists that it probably drove the ghosts of Louis, Marciano, and Robinson from the rafters. But by the end of the day, as The Prince likes to say, he proved that he could be both a warrior and an entertainer, winning both the fight and a large measure of respect from his new audience.

One new convert was Howie Albert, who has worked Madison Square Garden for nearly four decades. As co-manager of champions Emile Griffith and Juan LaPorte, he has been a participant in some of the building's finest boxing nights. Albert found himself in the Garden for Hamed's debut, working as the cutman for Kennedy McKinney, who met Junior Jones in the co-feature. Albert thought he had seen it all until he saw The Prince.

"Hamed is an incredible attraction,"

(Continued on page 60)

THE POUND-FOR-POUND KING!

Why Oscar De La Hoya Is Boxing's Best

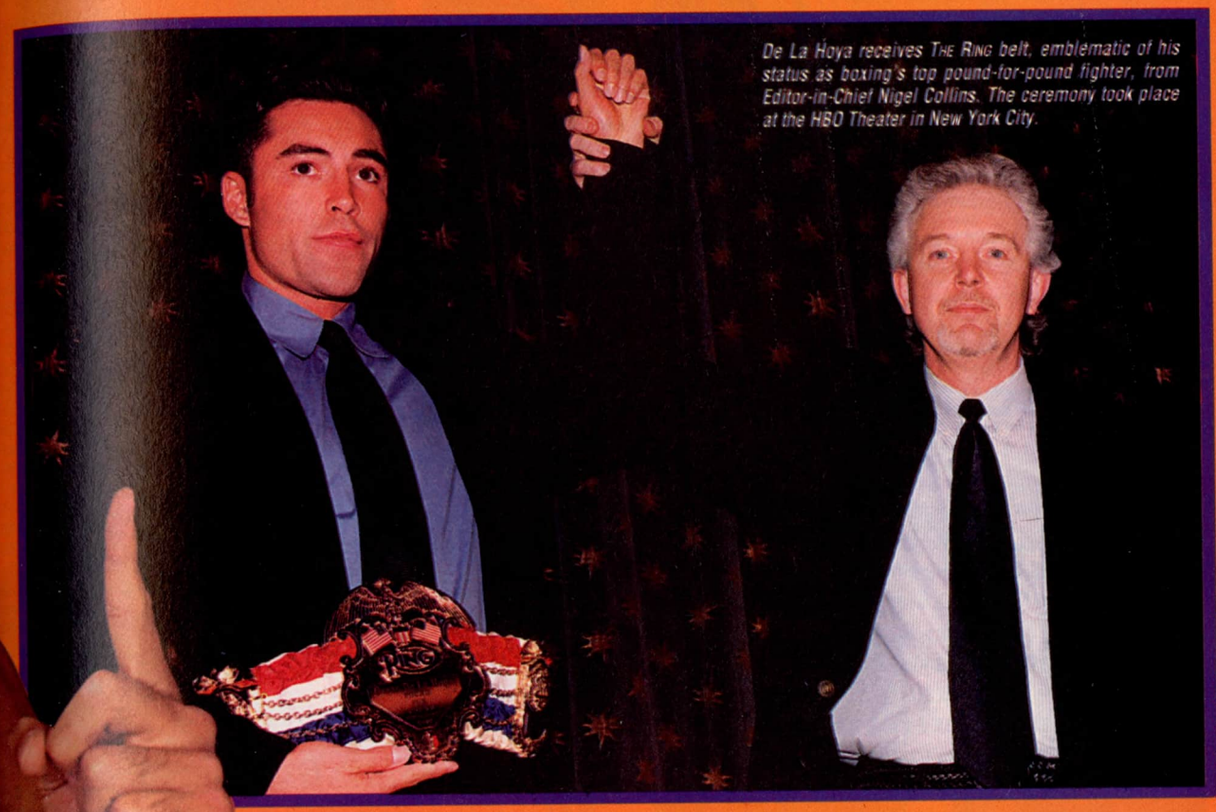
By Tim Graham

Oscar De La Hoya probably will find himself on a movie set one day. "The Golden Boy" already has lent his Hollywood good looks and charisma to dozens of television commercials and as many pay-per-view fight promos. Whenever De La Hoya does get in front of the motion picture camera—if he approaches his films like he does his fights—the director never will get frustrated enough to yell "Cut! Oscar, Oscar, you're doing it all wrong! Now let's do it one more time from the top—and this time with *feeling*!" That's because De La Hoya does not go through the motions.

Each time the WBC welterweight champion has been called upon to perform, he has done so right on cue, generating rave reviews in the process. Sure, some critics called his unanimous decision over Pernell Whitaker a turkey, but the bottom line proved differently. Not only did De La Hoya perform well in 1997, he performed often and he performed passionately. That is why THE RING recently presented him with a belt emblematic of the magazine's recognition as today's best pound-for-pound fighter.

The selection of De La Hoya, 27-0 (22), for this honor may raise some eyebrows. Readers may ask: Where does Roy Jones rate? What about Evander Holyfield or Felix Trinidad or Naseem Hamed? All were formidable candidates for the honor, but De La Hoya possesses the complete package. Unlike Holyfield, he has never been beaten in the ring. He has taken on a tougher schedule than Trinidad. He has not shown the defensive weaknesses of Hamed. Only Jones approaches De La Hoya's aura right now, but even he falls short. Maybe the fact that Jones' weight class lacks the star power that De La Hoya's seems to have in surplus gives the boxing world the appearance that Jones is going through the motions. Even so, the awesome light heavyweight has a tendency to fight down to the level of his subpar opposition rather than consistently turning in those flashy performances that made him famous.

Photo by Frank Vitucci



De La Hoya receives THE RING belt, emblematic of his status as boxing's top pound-for-pound fighter, from Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins. The ceremony took place at the HBO Theater in New York City.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Meanwhile, De La Hoya maintains his intensity each time he climbs between the ropes, whether it be for a routine sparring session or a lucrative title defense. He started 1997 with a dominant decision over the tenacious and previously unbeaten Miguel Angel Gonzalez in February. Next, De La Hoya edged Whitaker in April. Two months later, he got just as pumped up to face David Kamau and recorded an easy second-round knockout. De La Hoya's intensity next surfaced in September against a grab-happy Hector Camacho. Although The Golden Boy was gunning for the knockout from the opening bell, he managed only one knockdown, but won virtually every round to take a unanimous decision. He finished a busy campaign by scoring an eighth-round TKO of Wilfredo Rivera in December.

"I know I'm always going to be in for a war," De La Hoya said. "But I feel more confident now than ever, and I know that if I train hard, I can beat anybody."

There are detractors out there who claim De La Hoya and his promoter, Bob Arum, are ducking the top welterweights (i.e. Trinidad and Ike Quartey). But making deals with the other legs of the power-broker triangle always is tricky. Trinidad belongs to Don King, and Quartey works for Dino Duva. Despite the political hangups, De La Hoya has obliterated some excellent opponents. Names such as Julio Cesar Chavez, Genaro Hernandez, Rafael Ruelas, Jesse James Leija, John-John Molina, and Jorge Paez adorned his resume prior to 1997. De La Hoya was all set to take on Terry Norris in June '98, but the latter fell prey to Keith Mullings.

"Oscar may very well become one of the greatest fighters of all-time," said Arum, admittedly a biased observer, but not one who drops such compliments at will.

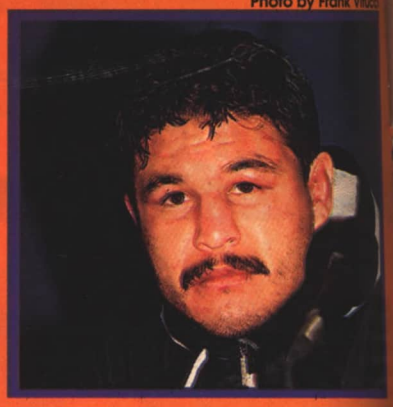
Arum's opinion notwithstanding, Jones has many supporters, and perhaps a closer examination of why he no longer occupies the top spot in THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings is in order.

Jones knows he lacks the passion De La

Hoya exudes. That is why he has tried gimmicks to motivate himself for the lesser opponents that have littered his path the last two-plus years. Jones required double duty in order to provide an adequate challenge when he defended the IBF super middleweight title against an overmatched Eric Lucas in June '96. Jones played point guard earlier in the day for the United States Basketball League franchise in Jacksonville, Florida. After unimpressively pounding the hardwood, he unimpressively pounded Lucas that night, scoring a 12th-round technical knockout against an opponent he should have taken out by halftime. Jones followed that drab outing with a devastating knockout victory over Bryant Brannon four months later, but only managed a ho-hum decision against timeworn Mike McCallum for the interim WBC light heavyweight belt in November.

Photo by Chris Farina

Photo by Frank Vitucci



First up for De La Hoya in 1998 will be mandatory challenger Patrick Charpentier (left), who was in Atlantic City providing color commentary for French TV. After that, IBF junior middleweight champion Yory Boy Campas (right) could be next for "The Golden Boy."

After hearing many critics tell him he was the top pound-for-pound fighter in the world and potentially one of the best of all-time, Jones lost his luster in '97. He took on Montell Griffin in March, and was disappointing in many ways. Jones was crisp in the first round and hurt Griffin. But when the bell rang for the second round, it

(Continued on page 63)

Oscar De La Hoya KO 8 Wilfredo Rivera

Oscar De La Hoya is so talented, even his mediocre performances sparkle. Such was the case when "The Golden Boy," seemingly caught between styles, made his third successful defense of the WBC welterweight title with an eighth-round TKO of Wilfredo Rivera at the Atlantic City Convention Center.

Following a two-fight tenure with Emanuel Steward at the helm, De La Hoya fired "The Kronk Wizard" and reinstated Robert Alcazar as head trainer and added Gil Clancy as a consultant. Despite conflicting rumors as to the exact reason Steward was bounced, the bottom line seemed to be that De La Hoya's father, Joel, was unhappy with the pairing and that family unity was more important to Oscar than Steward's undeniable expertise. The result, however, was a mixed bag that saw De La Hoya alternate between the all-out attacks favored by Steward and the more defensive-minded style taught by Jesus Rivero, the venerable coach who was given the heave-ho after De La Hoya struggled to outpoint Pernell Whitaker.

Following a feel-'em-out first round in which nothing of note happened, De La Hoya, 24, hurt Rivera with a left hook in the second, ripping open a jagged gash over his right eye in the process. When a perfectly timed right put Rivera, 28, on the floor in the fourth, it looked like the challenger from Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, was ready for an early exit. But the gritty Rivera, 27-3-1 (18), beat the count, survived another of De La Hoya's offensive outbursts, and was still around at the bell, albeit rather the worse for wear.

The Golden Boy was strangely passive in the sixth and seventh rounds. He stayed in control, but did far more bouncing than bashing. And despite the squeals of joy emanating from the numerous teenage girls among the crowd of 11,271 at the Atlantic City Convention Center, their handsome hero wasn't accomplishing a helluva lot. But Rivera's corner could not stem the flow of blood coming from his ravaged eyebrow, and when De La Hoya, 27-0 (22), unloaded with another cluster of combinations in the eighth,

referee Joe Cortez (USA) waved it off 2:48 into the round. De La Hoya was ahead by scores of 70-63, 68-63, and 69-63 at the time of the stoppage.

"One thing we've been working on is staying cool, staying calm," said De La Hoya when asked about his cautious approach. "I wanted to conduct myself like a professional in the ring and not just go crazy. Sometimes, fighters, when they see their opponent is hurt, they want to go in there and blow him away. But you have to be careful."

Careful or not, De La Hoya still fought well enough to stop a man who had twice gone the distance with Whitaker. French pastry Patrick Carpentier is next on the menu, and should pose even less of a threat than Rivera. But before De La Hoya tangles with the likes of Felix Trinidad, Ike Quartey, or Jose Luis Lopez, he'd be well advised to decide whether he wants to fight like Willie Pep or Ray Robinson. Because he'll never reach his full potential trying to be both at the same time.

Television: TVKO
Promoter: Top Rank
(12-6-97)

—Nigel Collins

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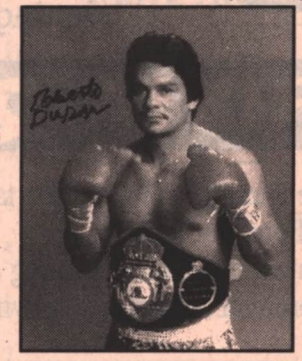

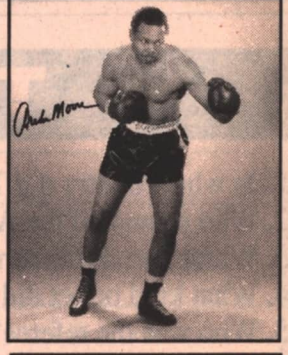

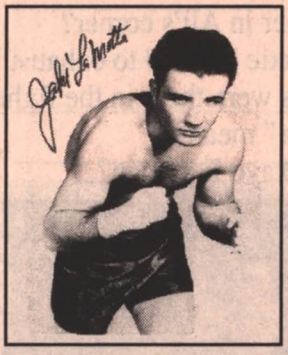

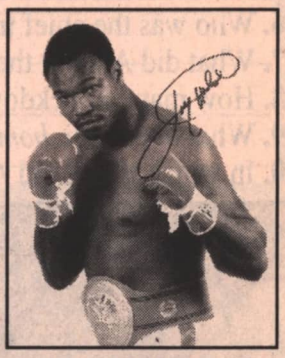

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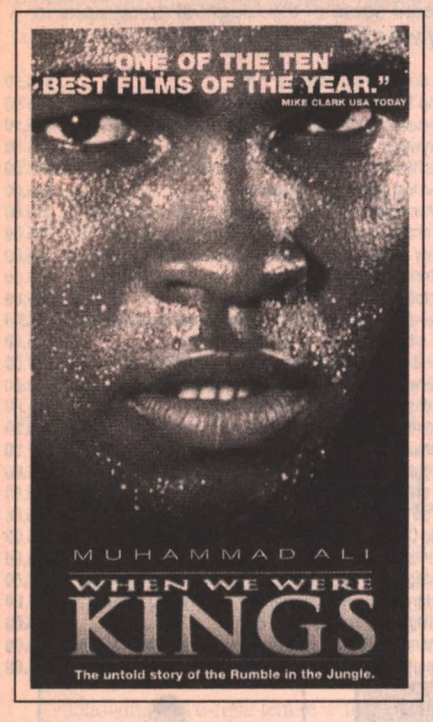

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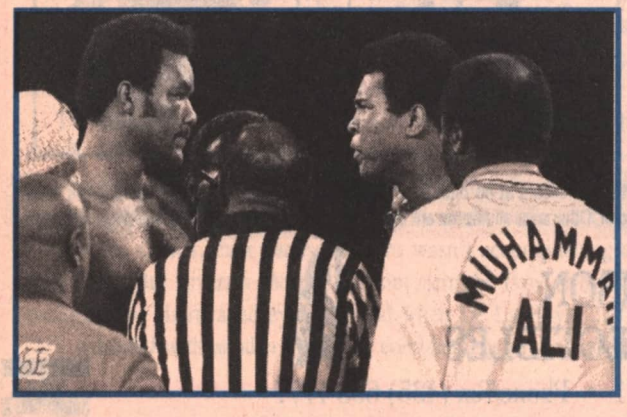
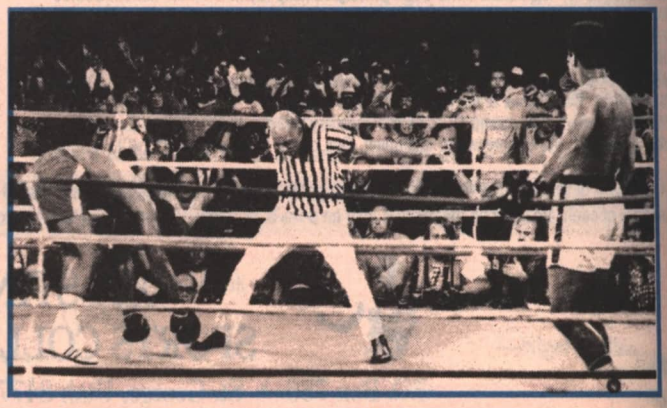
4. What kind of pet did Foreman take to Africa with him?
5. Who was the referee?
6. Who was the chief trainer in Ali's corner?
7. What did Ali call the tactic he used to exhaust Foreman?
8. How many knockdowns were there in the fight?
9. What does "*Ali, bomaye*" mean?
10. In which round did Ali kayo Foreman?





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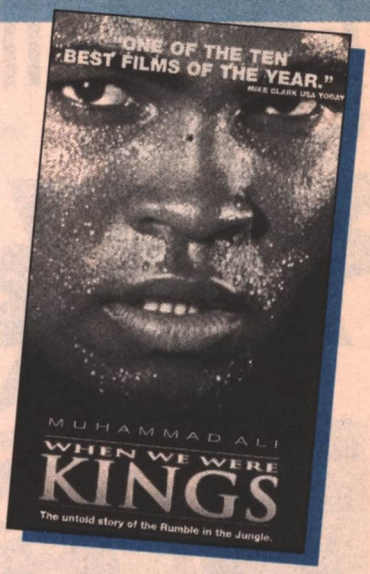

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All entries must be received by April 15, 1998. Winners will be selected by the editors of THE RING and notified by mail.

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Yes, I want to enter the Rumble in the Jungle Trivia Contest. I have filled out my entry form and answered all 10 questions.

SEND THIS FORM, COMPLETE WITH ALL 10 ANSWERS, TO:

THE RING
When We Were Kings Trivia Contest
P.O. BOX 750
FT. WASHINGTON, PA 19034

Please print

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ADDRESS _____ Apt. # ____

CITY _____ STATE ___ ZIP _____

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CONTEST RULES

THE CONTEST: The contest begins February 1, 1998, and ends April 15, 1998. To enter and be eligible to win, fill in the coupon (or print your name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and the words "Rumble In The Jungle TRIVIA CONTEST" on a 3"x5" piece of paper) and mail, together with your answers, numbered and listed in sequential order, to THE RING, Rumble in the Jungle Trivia Contest, P.O. Box 750, Ft. Washington, PA 19034. All entries must be postmarked by April 10, 1998 and received by April 15, 1998, to be eligible.

HOW TO WIN: One entry per household and one entry per envelope (or entries will be disqualified). Answer all ten (10) questions correctly and you qualify. London Publishing Co. will act as the contest administrator and verify the eligibility of each entry received. Approximately 10 days after the contest ends, or by April 25, 1998, five (5) Grand Prize winners, and twenty (20) Runner-Up Prize winners will be selected at random from among all eligible entries received that correctly answer all 10 questions. The Grand Prize winners will receive a video titled *When We Were Kings,* the official *When We Were Kings* movie poster, a replica of the Everlast trunks Ali wore in the fight, and an Everlast gym bag. The odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received that correctly answer all 10 questions. For complete rules and/or mail-in entry form with 10 Rumble in the Jungle trivia questions, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Rumble in the Jungle Trivia Contest, P.O. Box 750, Fort Washington, PA 19034. All mail-in entries must be postmarked no later than April 10, 1998, and received no later than April 15, 1998. Contest sponsored by London Publishing Co.

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS: No purchase necessary. Contest open to all residents of the Continental United States. All entries become property of London Publishing Co. No substitution of prizes or cash redemptions permitted by winners. Total value of each GRAND PRIZE is $76.00. The value of each Runner-Up Place prize is $25.00. Total value of contest prizes is approximately $880.00. THE RING and the contest's sponsor reserve the right to substitute any prizes of like value in the event the awarded prize(s) are not available for any reason whatsoever. In the event any winner elects not to take delivery of his/her prize, THE RING, at its own discretion, reserves the right to elect not to award the prize to a substitute winner. Each of the winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility. THE RING is not responsible for lost, misdirected, late, or ineligible entries. Void where prohibited or otherwise restricted by law. Some restrictions apply. Winners are responsible for all applicable federal, state, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a self-addressed stamped envelope by no later than May 15, 1998, to Winners, Rumble in the Jungle Trivia Contest, P.O. Box 750, Ft. Washington, PA 19034. This ad contains a complete list of contest rules and prize values.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Larry Donald W 12 Tim Witherspoon
Chris Byrd KO 9 Jimmy Thunder
Henry Akinwande W 12 Orlin Norris
Oliver McCall KO 1 Mike Ackley
Oliver McCall KO 2 Mike DeVito
Vaughn Bean KO 2 Kimmuel Odum
Greg Page KO KO 1 Kenneth Bentley
Tony Tucker KO 3 James Haynes
Brian Nielsen KO 1 Donnell Wingfield
Justine Fortune KO 6 Bob Mirovic
Danny Williams KO 4 Derek Amos

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Arthur Williams W 12 Adolpho Washington
Darren Corbett W 12 Robert Norton
David Izegwire KO 2 Fermin Chirino

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Dariusz Michalczewski KO 7 Daren Zenner
Montell Griffin W 10 Vinson Durham
Merqui Sosa W 10 Glen Johnson
Mark Prince KO 3 Wayne Hankins
Clinton Woods W 12 Mark Baker
David Telesco W 6 Napoleon Pitt
John Scully KO 6 Scott Lopeck

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Thulane Malinga W 12 Robin Reid
(Regains WBC Title)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Otis Grant W 12 Ryan Rhodes

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Winky Wright KO 7 Adrian Dodson
Tony Marshall KO 8 Orin Osbey
Emmett Linton W 10 Alex Lubo
Guillermo Jones KO 1 David Noel
Jason Papillion KO 2 Wilson Smith
Kevin Kelly KO 10 Ambrose M'Lilo
Christy Martin W 10 Marcela Acuna

WELTERWEIGHTS
Jose Luis Lopez KO 5 Ronnie Johnson
Patrick Charpentier KO 6 Wayne Boudreaux
Ray Collins W 10 Dindo Canoy
Fernando Vargas KO 1 Jose Fernandez

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Vince Phillips KO 10 Freddie Pendleton
(Retains IBF Title)
Antonio Diaz W 12 Ahmed Santos
Giovanni Parisi W 12 Jose Manuel Berdonce
Soren Sondergaard W 12 Viatcheslav Barinov
Ramel Mercardo KO 4 Jake Rodriguez
Zab Judah W 8 Anthony Johnson

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Goyo Vargas KO 9 Andre Cray
Harold Warren KO 1 Jose Espanol

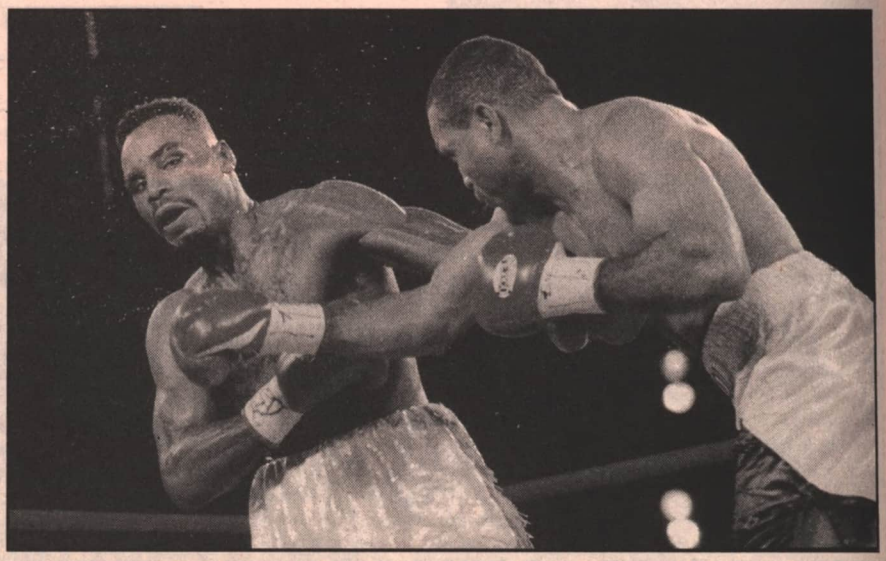

Photo by Holly Stein

Phillips beat Pendleton to retain the IBF junior welterweight title

Michael Clark KO 1 Roberto Nunez
Robbie Peden KO 3 Darryl Baker
Marco Rudolph W 12 Jean Gomis
Bruno Wartelle KO 5 Jose Disla

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Tracy Patterson KO 8 Manuel Chavez-Tellez
Barry Jones W 12 Wilson Palacio
Jorge Barrios KO 9 Manuel Billalba

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Luisito Espinosa KO 6 Carlos Rios
(Retains WBC Title)
Hector Lizarraga KO 11 Welcome Ncita
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Naseem Hamed KO 4 Kevin Kelley
Angel Vazquez KO 4 Baby Quinones
Orlando Soto W Disq. 5 Pedro Lopez
Freddie Norwood KO 6 Benito Rodriguez
Frankie Archuleta KO 3 Aureo Dominguez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Erik Morales KO 8 John Lowey
(Retains WBC Title)
Kennedy McKinney KO 4 Junior Jones
Cuauhtemoc Gomez W 12 Angel Chacon
Fabrice Benichou KO 8 Martin Krastev

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Andres Fernandez KO 10 Elias Paulin
Tommy Waite W 10 Vince Feeney

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Satoshi Iida W 12 Yokthai Sithoar
(Wins WBA Title)
Johnny Tapia W 12 Andy Agosto

FLYWEIGHTS

Manny Pacquiao KO 1 Tanompdej Singwangcha

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Mauricio Pastrana KO 3 Manuel Herrera
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Joma Gamboa D 10 Dennis Sabsal

STRAWWEIGHT

Zolani Pethelo KO 4 Ratanapol Sor Vorapin
Wins IBF Title)
Eric Jamili KO 8 Mickey Cantwell

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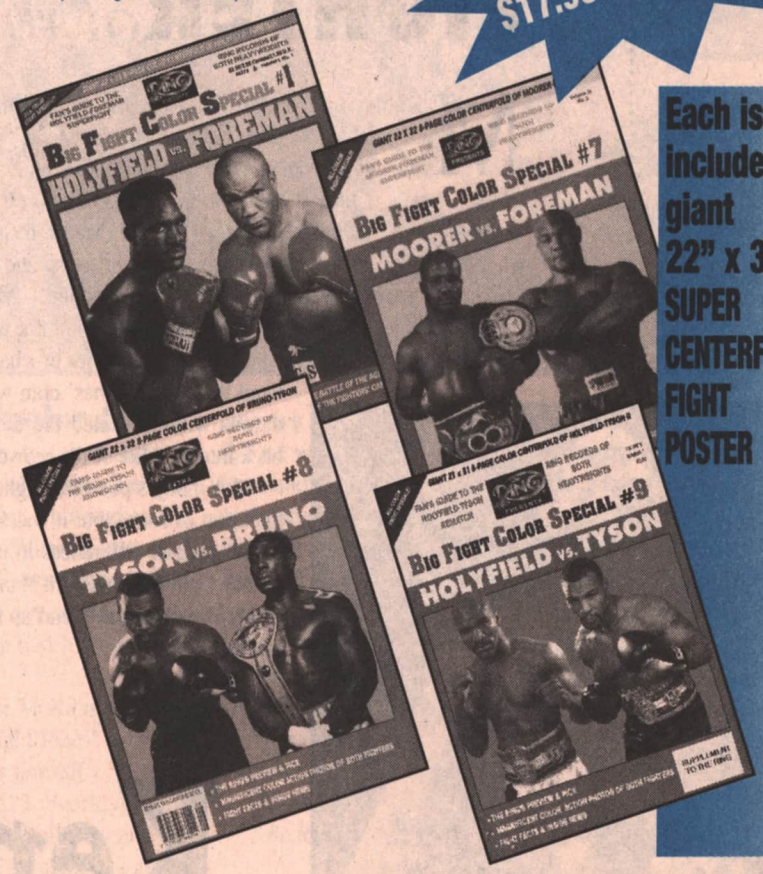

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

McKinney trailed badly in a lengthy fight with one of the most fearsome forms of poison imaginable, cocaine, before rising from the figurative canvas over a year ago to kayo his powdery opponent. So why should McKinney have feared a mere mortal who calls himself "Poison," even if Junior Jones was considered the finest 122-pounder in boxing? As far as McKinney was concerned, their December 19 fight at Madison Square Garden went exactly as planned, even when Jones floored the 1988 Olympic gold medalist and former IBF champ in the third round.

Though Jones won each of the first three rounds, McKinney knew going into the fourth that the fight was his for the taking. Jones punched himself out trying to put McKinney away, and "The King" beat the weary Jones to the punch with regularity in what would be the final round. An awesome right hand that struck Jones' chin while the New Yorker was just starting a ponderous windup sealed the deal, and rocketed the rejuvenated McKinney back into the elite of the crowded featherweight/junior featherweight ranks.

McKinney's powerful right hand and iron chin were important factors in his upset of Jones, but it was his veteran approach and desire that proved to be the biggest differences in this thrilling battle. Whether he secures a big-money fight with Naseem Hamed in '98 or not, McKinney's gutsy knockout of Jones will probably end up being the defining moment of his rollercoaster career.

• • • •

Kennedy McKinney

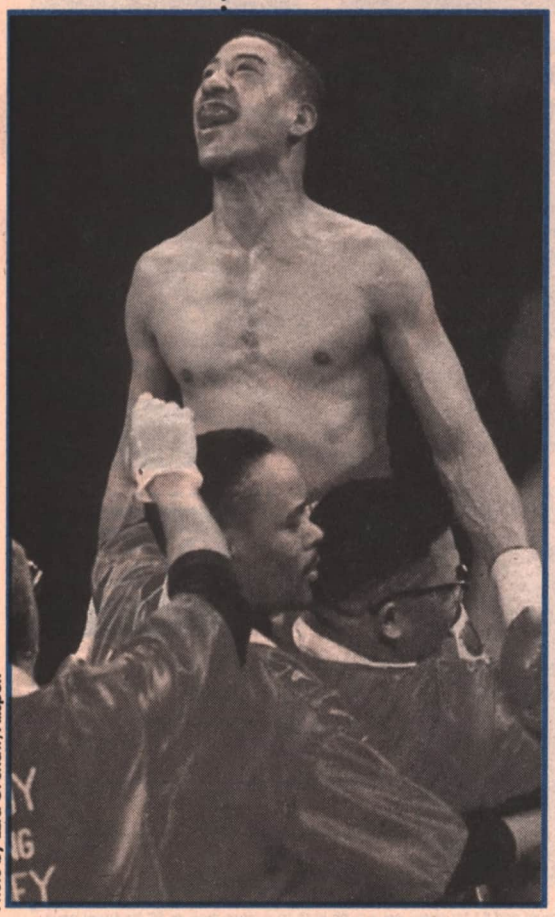
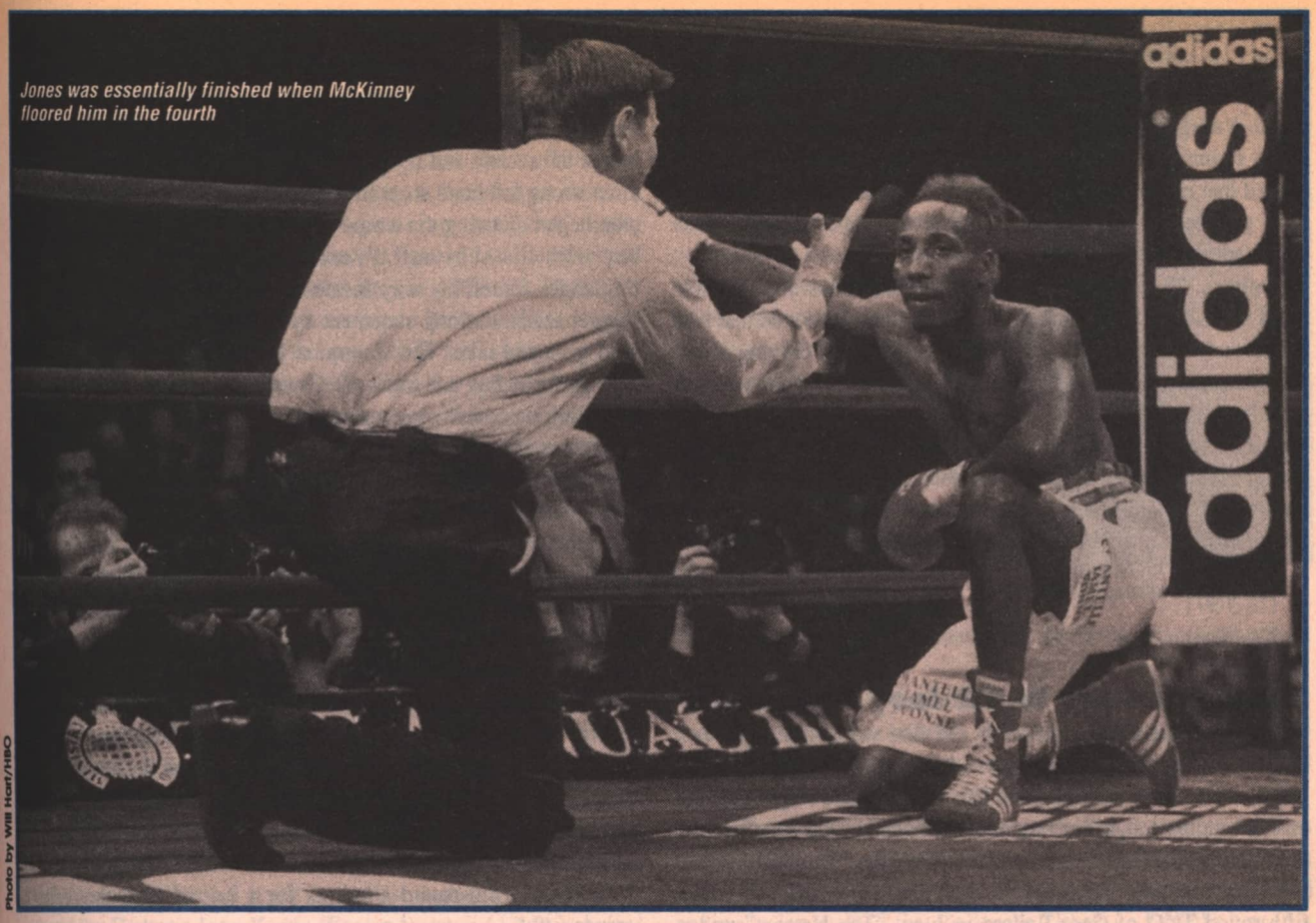


Photo by Ezra O. Shaw/Allsport



Jones was essentially finished when McKinney floored him in the fourth

Photo by Will Hart/HBO

Kennedy McKinney KO 4 Junior Jones

New York, New York: When two closely matched fighters square off, and one has done his homework while the other has not, the edge naturally goes to the competitor who studied his opponent rather than looking past him. When Jones and McKinney met in the semifinal to Naseem Hamed-Kevin Kelley at Madison Square Garden, it was Jones who got caught looking ahead to Hamed while underdog McKinney had his opponent scouted perfectly.

Former IBF junior featherweight champion McKinney, 121½, Memphis, Tennessee, had noted prior to the fight Jones' tendency to start fast but fade just as quickly, and leave himself vulnerable even when he seems to be in control. Jones, 122, Brooklyn, New York, clearly did not take note of McKinney's resiliency and the fact that his only kayo loss came late in the 12th round of a grueling battle with Marco Antonio Barrera. The evidence of Jones' ill preparation was presented in the third round when he floored McKinney with a tremendous right to the jaw and then completely exhausted himself trying to put "The King" away. The punch count of 105 blows thrown by Jones in the round provided quantitative proof of what his wobbly legs suggested: that "Poison" had defanged himself in his premature effort to finish McKinney.

Though Jones, 27, dominated the first three rounds, overcoming a headbutt-induced gash on his right cheek in the first minute of the fight to score with an assortment of left hooks and combinations to the head and body, he came out for the fourth round looking much worse than his battered opponent. McKinney, 31, caught Jones leaning in with a pair of quick right hands, the second one dropping him cleanly in the eyes of all but referee Wayne Kelly (USA), who ruled that McKinney pulled him down. Jones probably could have used the brief rest a knockdown provides, though, as he stumbled through the ring ropes moments later and was finally floored by a perfectly timed right hand late in the round. Jones, 44-3 (26), climbed to his feet and told Kelly he was okay to continue, but his head-first tumble into McKinney's legs suggested otherwise. Kelly called a halt to the bout at 2:39 of the fourth, prompting Jones fans to hurl trash at the ring as McKinney, 33-3-1 (19), jumped about wildly, celebrating the upset.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Frank Warren
(12-19-97)
Eric Raskin

Keith Holmes KO 11 Paul Vaden

Pompano Beach, Florida: Holmes overcame 50-degree temperatures (chilly for South Florida) and a game challenge from former IBF junior middleweight champion Vaden to record the second defense of the WBC middleweight title he won in March 1996. The fight was held at the Pompano Beach Amphitheater, only a few miles from promoter Don King's posh headquarters. In stark contrast to his last title fight, an embarrassing, survival-oriented non-effort against Terry Norris in December '95, Vaden came to fight. The problem, as he quickly learned, was that Holmes simply was the better fighter.

After a closely contested opening round, Holmes, 157¼, Bowie, Maryland, took control of the fight with a spearing right

jab that kept Vaden at bay. Holmes floored Vaden twice in the fourth round, but Vaden, 158, Chula Vista, California, survived to the bell. When Holmes did not press the issue in the following round, Vaden managed to get inside and land enough right hands to the champion's head to capture round five. Vaden, 27-2 (14), carried that momentum through the sixth round, but Holmes, 31-1 (21), got the jab going again in the seventh and opened a gash over Vaden's left eyebrow.

Holmes, 28, was cruising toward a unanimous decision win when he landed a right hand to the head in the 11th round that hurt Vaden and caused him to wobble backward against the ring ropes. The champion unleashed a flurry of punches, punctuated by a right hook to Vaden's head that sent the challenger to the canvas. Vaden, 29, arose at the count of eight, but he staggered toward his corner. Trainer Abel Sanchez climbed the ring apron, sparing Vaden further punishment. The fight was officially waved over by referee Brian Garry (USA) at 1:11 of the 11th round.

Television: Showtime

(12-5-97)

Ken Knox

Charles Brewer W 12 Joey DeGrandis

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: In the first world title fight ever held at the legendary Blue Horizon, hometown hero Brewer, 166½, successfully defended the IBF super middleweight championship against tough but outgunned Bostonian DeGrandis, 168, dominating his way to a unanimous decision. Though this was Brewer's first title defense since capturing the vacant belt with a fifth-round TKO of Gary Ballard in June, "The Hatchet" understood the greater significance of the fight.

"I knew what tonight was, and I knew what tonight meant," Brewer said afterward, referring to fighting in a building where 29 world champions had fought either before capturing titles or after their reigns had ended. "Tonight, I did what no one else in the history of Philadelphia has done at the Blue Horizon."

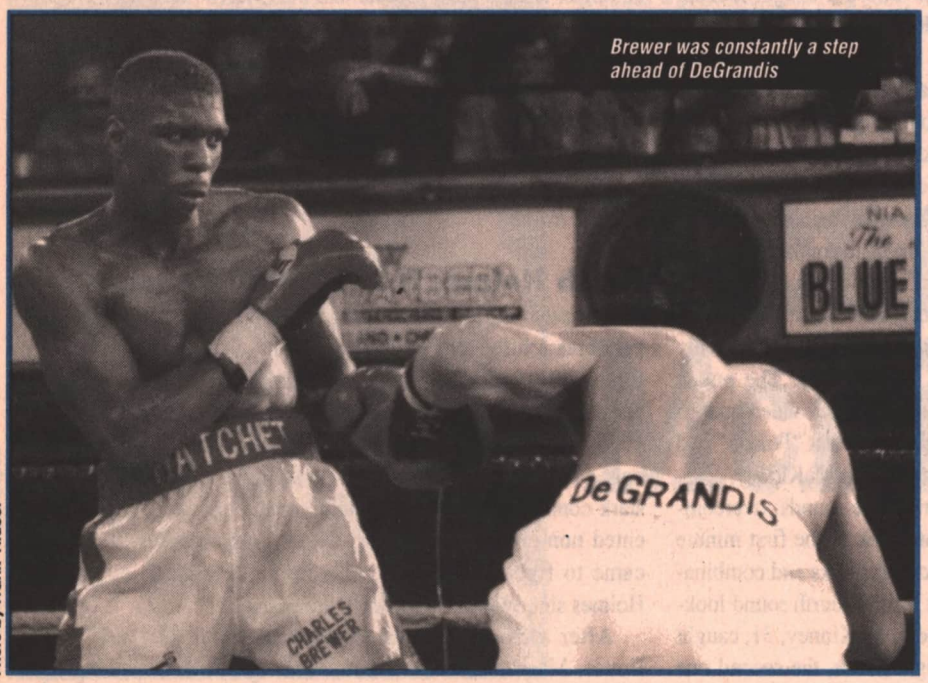
DeGrandis, 28, fought very aggressively in the first round, ducking his head and working his way inside. The challenger landed several good bodyshots in the opening minutes and controlled the pace of the fight, but Brewer, 28, turned things around late in the second and never looked back. After DeGrandis landed three strong left hand shots in the first half of the round, the champion began dictating the tempo with his jab, keeping DeGrandis at bay with his substantial reach advantage. When the New Englander forced his way inside toward the end of the second, Brewer made a strong statement by outdueling his opponent in a wild give-and-take. The champion had made it clear that while he'd prefer to box and move, DeGrandis would also have difficulty finding success in close quarters.

Brewer began piling up the points in the third, using his jab to keep out of DeGrandis' range. The Hatchet landed an excellent three-punch combination in the fifth, though DeGrandis let the champion know he was still there with a tremendous right uppercut to the jaw late in the round. Brewer continued to throw substantially more punches than his opponent in the middle rounds, and DeGrandis began resorting to holding in the seventh instead of allowing Brewer to mercilessly batter his face.

After a tremendous right to DeGrandis' jaw in the ninth, Brewer seemed to concede that the iron-chinned challenger would not go down. As the champ shifted into cruise mode, knowing the decision was out of DeGrandis' reach, the Boston native turned his clutching tactics up a notch, perhaps trying to frustrate Brewer into making an aggressive mistake. It was not to be, though, and DeGrandis' 12th-round attempts for a miracle knockout were unsuccessful.

All three judges made Brewer a comfortable winner. Jean Williams (USA) scored it 117-111, Clark Sammartino (USA) saw it 119-109, and George Hill (USA) gave Brewer the 120-108 shutout. THE RING had Brewer winning by 119-111.

Afterward, DeGrandis, 23-4 (11), said he simply didn't fight the kind of fight he wanted to. "It was a good display of boxing on his behalf, but I should have been crowding him. Instead of moving side to side, I just kept rushing in. He didn't hurt me, I didn't get tired, I just had nothing. We all make mistakes, we learn from our mistakes."



Brewer was constantly a step ahead of DeGrandis

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Conversely, Brewer, 30-5 (20), executed his game plan perfectly, save for the first round. "I did brawl when I should have boxed [in the early going]. But I hit him with solid shots, definitely some good uppercuts, but he's a fighter who can take quite a lot of punishment. [In the 12th round] I was telling him to stop holding, the title's staying here."

The referee was Rudy Battle (USA).

Television: USA Network

Promoter: Peltz Boxing Promotions Inc.

(12-2-97)

Eric Raskin

Herol Graham W 12 Vinny Pazienza

London, England: Sold to the public on images of sex and violence, this super middleweight bout at Wembley Arena followed predictable lines. Pazienza, 168, Providence, Rhode Island, had not fought for 16 months and had to struggle to shake off the ring rust. Graham, 165½, Sheffield, England, never considered a knockout specialist, relied on containing tactics all night. Graham's eccentric boxing won him the fight and, at the advanced age of 38, a possible shot at Charles Brewer's IBF title. Defeat for Paz was followed by a precautionary trip to the hospital and a general perception that his day in the sun may be well and truly over.

It was ominous for the American from the opening bell with Graham, 48-5 (28), firing out an accurate southpaw jab. Pazienza, 41-7 (28), was unhurt by it, but, like many Graham opponents in the past, was unable to get away from it. Pazienza was reduced to an occasional right to the body and badly timed, unsustained bull charges. By the end of the fifth round, blood was dripping from his nose and there was grazing beneath both eyes.

But "The Pazmanian Devil" is nothing if not determined, and in the middle rounds appeared at last to be wearing Graham down. Despite feeling the pace, Graham remained frustratingly elusive. A long right nailed him in the sixth, but Pazienza, 34, struggled to land one on him again. Another right, however, stunned Graham near the end of the ninth, and Pazienza launched a vicious two-fisted assault at the start and end of the 10th.

Graham weathered the storm, caught Pazienza with a perfectly timed left uppercut in the 11th, and threw the more accurate shots as Pazienza tried to pull it out in the last round. All three judges scored for Graham: John Keane (England) saw it 117-112, Anibal Miramontes (USA) had it 116-113, and Bob Logist (Belgium) scored it 118-113. THE RING had it 117-111 for Graham.

The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

Television: USA Network

Promoter: Panix Promotions

(12-6-97)

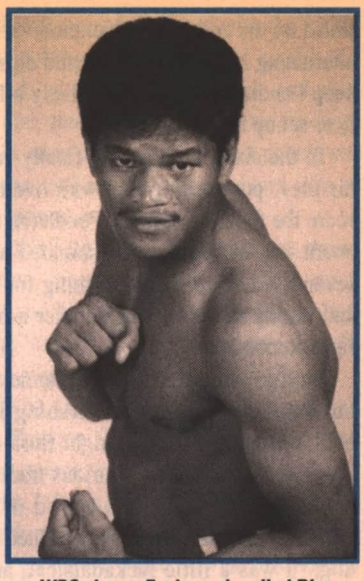
Brian Doogan

Luisito Espinosa KO 6 Carlos Rios

Koronadal, Philippines: Hard-punching Filipino Espinosa, 125½, successfully defended the WBC featherweight title for the fifth time, as he impressively dropped previously unbeaten WBC number-one contender Rios, 125½, Argentina, three times on his way to a TKO victory at 1:29 of the sixth round. Some 30,000 spectators were in attendance at South Cotabato Stadium.

It was truly an action-packed affair. Espinosa, taller by two inches, started cautiously, keeping his distance, while Rios tried to get close to the defending champ. During a heated first-round exchange, Espinosa landed a solid left hook and opened a gash around the right eye of the Argentine challenger. In the closing seconds of the opening session, Espinosa exploded a countering left hook that floored Rios for the mandatory eight-count. The bell came to his rescue.

The 30-year-old Espinosa tried to continue in the second with his strategy of keeping his distance. An accidental butt of Rios' head and Espinosa's mouth caused the champ to fall down. Referee Jay Nady (USA) gave the champ a minute to rest in the corner. It wasn't enough time, however, for the Filipino to recuperate. Espinosa, still dazed, resumed fighting, but Rios battered him with a barrage of heavy blows. Espinosa was barely saved by the bell.



WBC champ Espinosa handled Rios

In the third, Espinosa was able to keep his distance against the willing mixer, who inexplicably didn't pursue the champ despite seeing that he had obviously been hurt in the previous round. The champion connected with a beautiful countering right to the onrushing Argentine, dropping him on the deck with a thud. Despite absorbing such a devastating shot, Rios promptly jumped up to beat the count.

Espinosa solved Rios' fight plan, circling and occasionally countering with faster punches in the fifth. Espinosa landed a solid left hook followed by a right uppercut, flooring Rios, who was saved by the bell again.

Espinosa tried to close it in the sixth. The champ pinned Rios to the ropes and connected with a very strong right to the face. Espinosa, 42-7 (22), had Rios, 39-1-1 (29), rubbery-legged and reeling, as he stalked the challenger. When he brought him to a standstill in the corner, Nady called for a well-advised stoppage.

After the fifth round, the official tallies were as follows: Nicolas Hidalgo (Venezuela) and Ken Morita (Japan) had it 49-43, and Daniel Talon (France) scored it 48-44, all for Espinosa.

Promoter: Joe Koizumi in association with Nazario-Mondejar Productions

(12-6-97)

Vince Phillips KO 10 Freddie Pendleton

Pompano Beach, Florida: Kill the head and the body will follow? With a challenger known for his chuck-and-don't-duck style and a champion with a lethal overhand right who refuses to take a backward step, no one in his right mind would have wagered on this one going the distance.

Phillips, 38-3 (27), making the second defense of the IBF junior welterweight title he won in May from Kostya Tszyu, kept his cool despite fiery rushes from Pendleton, 43-22-4 (31), in the opening stages to score a stoppage with a crippling left hook to the body at 41 seconds of the 10th.

From the start, Pendleton, who was on a three-fight win streak—all by knockout—decided to wing instead of jab his way in. He paid the price as he ate rights from Phillips, 140, Las Vegas, Nevada, who was content to counter and crack his challenger from a distance, establishing a tempo that held to form throughout.

Pendleton, 140, Miami, showed a flicker of a jab and took control early in the fourth, but Phillips stayed composed and concen-

trated on the body. The champion varied his attack, alternating rights to the head and digs down low to keep Pendleton honest, effectively killing his ability to set up his power shots.

In the sixth, Phillips, 34, finally caught up with his prey, pot-shotting him with overhand rights to score the first knockdown. Pendleton took an eight-count just before the bell sounded and began the seventh a beaten man, clinching for the first time and tasting the canvas again after a punishing left-right combination.

Phillips attempted to drive home the final nail, but Pendleton caught him coming in with a left hook on the inside and a right flush on the cheek. The round ended with a furious trade on the ropes as the announced sellout crowd of 2,500 at the Pompano Beach Amphitheater rallied for the underdog. "I was a little lackadaisical, and he caught me," Phillips said. "It woke me up."

Phillips wised up and reverted to the jab, and landed at will with one-twos. Pendleton, 34, also rediscovered his jab in the ninth, trading evenly with Phillips until desperation took its toll. The challenger lunged with a left hook, missed, and fell the canvas. Sensing his opponent was out of gas, Phillips hammered home a series of rights as Pendleton went through the ropes, prompting referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) to issue another eight-count as the round ended.

The outcome now was a foregone conclusion, and in the 10th Phillips dinged Pendleton with two rights. After missing over the top with a left-right, Phillips went to the body with a right hook-left hook, the latter landing perfectly and sending Pendleton crumbling to the floor, where he gasped for air as Kimmons counted him out.

None of the three judges, Al DeVito (USA), Hilton Whitaker (USA), or Frank Skilbred (USA), had given Pendleton a round—nor had THE RING—but it wasn't as easy as the scoring seemed to indicate.

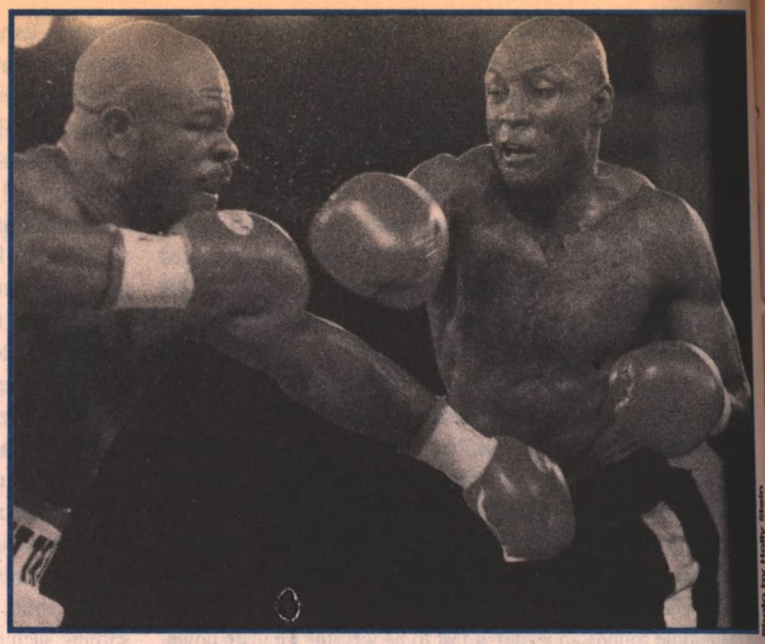


Photo by Holly Stein

Akinwande's size was the difference in his "elimination" bout with Norris

Television: U.S. Satellite Broadcasting
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-13-97)
Johnnie Whitehead

Henry Akinwande W 12 Orlin Norris

Pompano Beach, Florida: Holding to what has become a troubling pattern, Akinwande has become boxing's version of Mr. Clutch. He walked away from his WBA elimination bout with a deserved—albeit unimpressive—unanimous decision, but did little to justify his standing.

Norris, 221, Lubbock, Texas, lunged from all angles without a semblance of balance or a jab, failing miserably in his attempts to cut off the ring at the Pompano Beach Amphitheater. He was begging the 32-year-old Akinwande, 33-1-1, (19), for a well-timed uppercut to lull him to sleep, but the Dulwich, England, native, 235, showed the same disdain for infighting that led to his disqualification in his WBC title fight with Lennox Lewis in July. It could have been a repeat performance if referee Jorge Alonso (USA) had deducted a point earlier instead of waiting until the 12th round, after he had warned the offender for the *seventh* time.

There were few clean punches landed by either, but the 6'7" Akinwande had his way whenever he committed to his jab against the 5'10" Norris. The Englishman occasionally mixed in a straight right that scored well, but he opened almost every round by

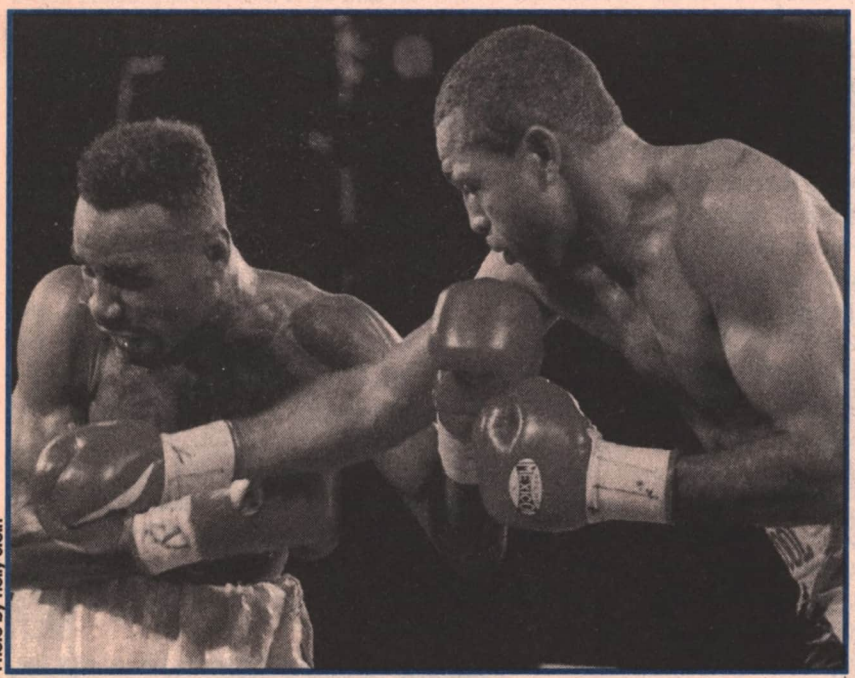


Photo by Holly Stein

Phillips landed the stronger shots in his war with Pendleton

instantly retreating to the ropes and then clinching, looking to Alonso for help instead of fighting his way out or going to the body. Norris found his target every now and again, but never could mount a sustained attack. Akinwande had his chances, too, but opted to back up and slap with his left hook, neglecting to turn it over into a true power shot.

It took the 12th-round point deduction for a real fight to break out and light a fire under Akinwande. He struck with a three-punch combination and finally landed a hard hook to Norris' body. It was, however, too late. The dance was over.

The judges voted convincingly in Akinwande's favor. Mark Streisand (USA) scored it 117-110, Jay Kassees (USA) had it 119-108, and Ric Bays (USA) saw it 118-109.

"The guy came out to fight, but that's not easy to get to my body," Akinwande said. "He didn't throw nothing. He didn't even hurt me. There was a lot of pressure in this fight. I needed to redeem myself in a big way."

Maybe next time.

Television: U.S. Satellite Broadcasting
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-13-97)
Johnnie Whitehead

Johnny Tapia W 12 Andy Agosto

Pompano Beach, Florida: There aren't many one-sided affairs that can be called entertaining, but Tapia's game opponent wowed everyone with his ability ... to take an unmerciful beating en route to losing a unanimous decision.

Tapia, 115, Albuquerque, New Mexico, in his first fight since his upset of Danny Romero in July, dominated the little-known Agosto, 115, Carolina, Puerto Rico. His left hook repeatedly found the mark, and the only suspense that remained was how long it would take for the 30-year-old Tapia to dispose of Agosto, 27, who had been stopped in the second round of his last fight—in September against Julio Gamboa—but somehow still managed to get a title shot.

Photo by Holly Stein

Agosto couldn't handle Tapia's body attack

Tapia realized he could do whatever he wanted with the southpaw Agosto, who, though lacking sufficient hand speed and power, was at least as colorful, with Christmas-red hair and paisley trunks. Tapia hit his rhythm quickly as he tagged his foe with quick jabs. Tapia, 42-0-2 (24), soon discovered his best punch was a left hook to the body, as he weaved under right-hand jabs to counter beautifully from the second round on.

Agosto's best round was the 12th, when he caught the showboating champion with several uppercuts and bloodied his nose. Tapia went back to his bread and butter with more thunderous left hooks to the body as the crowd at the Pompano Beach Amphitheater marveled at the masochistic Agosto, 14-2 (7).

Judge Rocky Young (USA) scored it 120-108, Robert Cox (USA), 117-111, and Hugh Peniche (USA), 119-109. THE RING had it 119-110 for Tapia. The referee was Frank Santore (USA).

"He had one hell of a chin," Tapia said. "I told the referee to stop the fight ... because Andy wasn't throwing any real punches back at me. I think I want to go for the WBC belt at 118 pounds next, but I'll do whatever Don King says."

Television: U.S. Satellite Broadcasting
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-13-97)
Johnnie Whitehead

Hector Lizarraga KO 11 Welcome Ncita

Pompano Beach, Florida: Forget a telephone booth. It must've felt like fighting in a pressure cooker as Lizarraga smothered and battered Ncita into submission to win the vacant IBF featherweight title.

While Ncita's best rounds came when he kept Lizarraga, 124, Fresno, California, off-balance with his jab, he chose to slug with a slugger and was repeatedly clocked with double left hooks. Though he actually never hit the canvas, Ncita took a brutal beating vying for the title vacated by Naseem Hamed (who relinquished the belt rather than take a mandatory defense against Lizarraga).

Ncita, 126, did his best work in the third and fifth rounds. After cutting Lizarraga over the left eye in the second, Ncita easily picked him off with crisp jabs in the third before switching to infighting in hopes of finishing matters. In the fifth, Ncita landed flush with a pair of uppercuts with his back to the ropes, as the slower Lizarraga—his right eye now bruised underneath and swelling—relinquished his body assault and appeared to be running on empty.

The play shifted again in the sixth, however, with Lizarraga, 31, burying his head into Ncita's chest and luring him into furious exchanges with the 32-year-old native of Mdantsane, South Africa, coming out on the short end. A looping right buckled Ncita—both eyes now swelling—as he began to show noticeable signs of slowing, lacking the foot movement and jab he had showed earlier.

Lizarraga, 34-8-5 (20), continued to cut off the ring masterfully in the ninth, unleashing two right hooks to the body as Ncita's legs did a dip. It was an instant replay in the 10th, with Lizarraga flurrying at the end of the round with a barrage of hooks as Ncita, 40-3 (21), failed to keep him at a distance.

Referee Armando Garcia (USA) stopped the bout after Ncita's corner refused to let their fighter answer the bell for the 11th.

Judges Jay Kassees (USA), Eugene Grant (USA), and Billy Ray (USA) had Lizarraga comfortably ahead at the time of the stoppage.

"I've always been a very well-conditioned fighter," Lizarraga said. "I knew those bodyshots would get to him. I kept working to the body and came up with headshots ... [Now] that belt belongs to me."

Television: U.S. Satellite Broadcasting
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-13-97)
Johnnie Whitehead

Photo by Holly Stein

Lizarraga and Ncita engaged in a thriller in Pompano Beach

Mauricio Pastrana KO 3 Manuel Herrera

Pompano Beach, Florida: Apparently in a hurry for an early exit, Pastrana literally gave Herrera the hook at 1:57 of the third round to regain he IBF junior flyweight title. Pastrana, 17-0 (14), caught Herrera with a left hook-straight right combination, followed by a fusillade of sweeping blows to end matters as referee Bill Connor (USA) reached the count of 10 at the Pompano Beach Amphitheater.

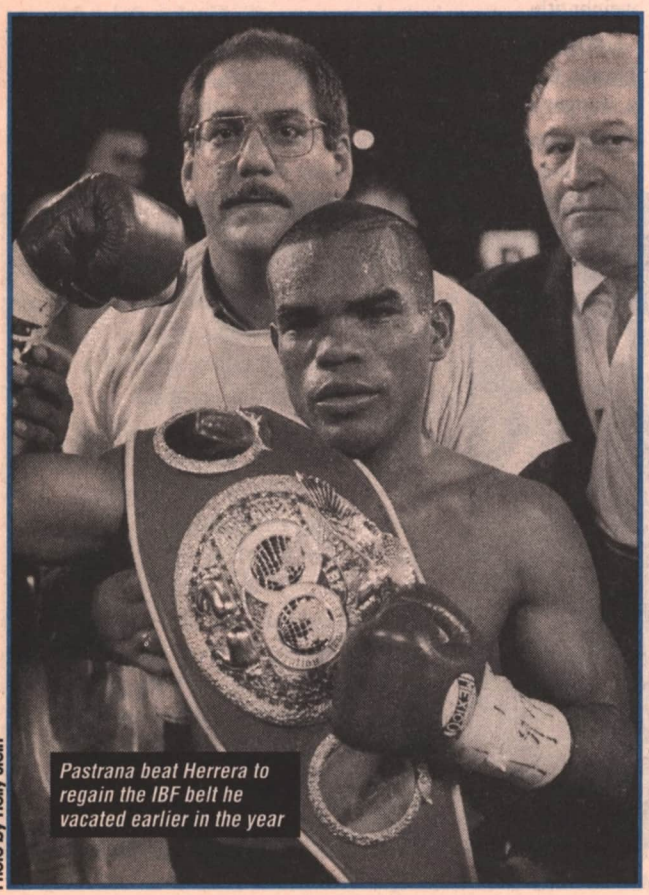


Photo by Holly Stein

Pastrana beat Herrera to regain the IBF belt he vacated earlier in the year

Pastrana, Miami, Florida, opened most exchanges with lead rights and left hooks, turning it into a slugfest from the start. He floored Herrera in the second, feinting left and landing a straight right over the ear.

With Herrera, 18-6-2 (7), spent and ready to go, Pastrana, 24, led with a left hook before depositing his overmatched opponent again with a four-punch combination. The aforementioned left-right combination finished Herrera, 28, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who slumped to the canvas without a hint of getting up.

The judges were Stuart Winston (USA), Al Bennett (USA), and Sam Conde (Puerto Rico).

Pastrana vacated the premises hurriedly after his title-winning effort, but his foil stuck around long enough to give his simple perspective. "I am frustrated because this was my first title fight and I lost," said Herrera.

Television: U.S. Satellite Broadcasting
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-13-97)
Johnnie Whitehead

Satoshi Iida W 12 Yokthai Sithoar

Nagoya, Japan: Lanky Japanese lefty Iida, 115, dropped defending champ Sithoar, 114¾, with a southpaw left in the opening session, piled up good points midway through the contest, and withstood the furious last surge of the Thailander to wrest the WBA junior bantam title on a close but unanimous decision over 12 hard-fought rounds. Some 7,800 partisan fans were in attendance at Aichi Prefectural Gymnasium to see the local favorite Iida's anticipated coronation. The scores of judges Erki Meronen (Finland), Waldemar Schmidt (Puerto Rico), and Rodolfo

Maldonado (Panama) were 115-112, 115-111, and 114-113, respectively, all for the 28-year-old Japanese challenger.

This was a grudge fight, as the two had battled to a majority draw in Nagoya last April 29. Many people thought Iida had won their first encounter and truly deserved a rematch, having moved up to the WBA's number-two rank, thanks to the drawn verdict.

The opening session saw Iida floor the champ with a well-timed left. Sithoar, 22, looked stiff, nervous, and slow. Iida, taller by an inch, kept outboxing Sithoar, and constantly threw southpaw jabs and right-left combinations from the second round on. Iida swept the first four rounds, as Sithoar, a flat-footed warrior, failed to catch him. The Thailander, making his fifth defense, shifted his target exclusively to Iida's breadbasket from the fifth on.

The game and hard-punching champ was twice penalized for low blows, in the sixth and ninth. The champ frequently attempted to dispatch Iida with his specialty, a straight right to the belly, but Iida's footwork allowed him to avert this lethal weapon. Sithoar dominated the seventh, but Iida, circling to the right, scored well with light but accurate one-two combos to win the eighth and ninth.

With a huge lead on points, thanks to the first-round knockdown and two-time deduction of a point from the champ, Iida seemed on his way to a lopsided victory. Sithoar, however, showed his pride and determination in the last three rounds. Aware of being behind on points, Sithoar recklessly and roughly began chasing Iida with big left hooks to the head and straight rights. He accelerated his attack to have him at bay in the 11th, when Iida could not move well due to his fast pace in earlier rounds. The 12th and final session saw Iida moving and grabbing the relentless aggressor all the way. Sithoar's attacks were such that Schmidt scored 10-8 for Sithoar in the last two rounds, even though there were no knockdowns.

Iida, a stylish and handsome speedster, raised his mark to 23-1-1 (11), while Sithoar dropped to 14-1-1 (8). Songchai Ratansuban, Sithoar's promoter, strongly disputed the official verdict and Venezuelan referee Enzo Montero's point deductions. But for all Ratansuban's complaints, the reality of the situation was that Sithoar didn't look sharp this time. He failed to make the stipulated 115-pound limit initially, and had to reduce 1½ pounds in an hour.

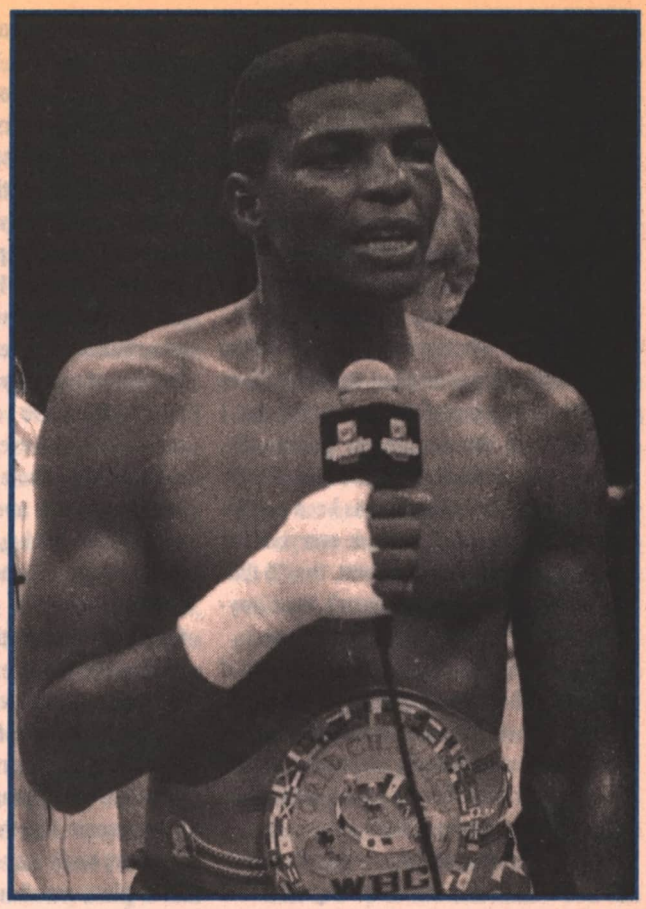
(12-23-97)

Joe Koizumi

Sugarboy Malinga W 12 Robin Reid

London, England: So devoid of action was this nondescript 12-rounder that it barely deserved to be on a world title card, much less receive chief billing. Nobel Peace Prizes have been awarded to more war-minded people. The veteran Malinga, 166, Johannesburg, South Africa, did enough with his left jab to take the verdict and regain the WBC super middleweight title at London Arena, but only because Reid, 167½, Runcorn, England, was so compliant and lackluster. It was Reid's fourth defense, while Malinga, who was stopped by Roy Jones for the IBF version, previously claimed this title from Nigel Benn before surrendering it to Italian Vincenzo Nardiello in another lifeless affair.

"You hit me first—no, you hit me first," seemed to be the agreed strategy, which degenerated into, "Well, okay, let's not bother." Referee John Keane (Great Britain) should undoubtedly have reminded both men of the sport's objectives, but maybe he was lulled to sleep like everybody else. (French super featherweight Julien Lorcy, who was seated ringside, literally was asleep from the 10th round on.)



Malinga became WBC super middleweight champ again by upsetting Reid

Nothing of note happened in any of the first three rounds, save for a slight nosebleed suffered by Malinga, 42-10 (17), that presumably resulted from a punch—though nobody was quite sure. Reid, 25-1-1 (18), switched to southpaw in the fourth, but his jabs remained short while Malinga's marginally more persistent jabbing had marked up Reid's face fairly comprehensively by the middle rounds.

Reid, 26, threatened to increase the pace in the seventh, but then didn't, leading the crowd to boo at the bell, and at the end of the next round as well.

Malinga, 38, fell in the ninth, but only from a push, and cut Reid in the 10th underneath his right eye and inside his mouth. The Englishman tried to pull out something in the final round, but was largely ineffective. The judges, who probably should have gone on strike, were split. Walter Schall (Austria) scored 115-114 for Reid, but Simon Tsekeletse (South Africa) and Bob Logist (Belgium) had it 117-112 and 117-113, respectively, for Malinga. THE RING saw it 117-114 for Malinga.

Promoter: Frank Warren

(12-19-97)

Brian Doogan ■

Evander Holyfield

(Continued from page 37)

and he just hasn't had the opportunity to fight the caliber of guys who I've fought.

The Ring: How big of a disappointment would it be if you never got to fight Lewis?

EH: None whatsoever. I think it will be more of a disappointment to him. I have fought all the best fighters of this era. I don't think the people are gonna say, "Well, you dodged one." Because every fighter who I have fought has been considered the best, and if you ask everybody if they consider Lennox the best, they'll flat-out say no, because he hasn't beat anybody who people thought was the best.

The Ring: Judging by the past, even if you unify the titles, the alphabet organizations will look for ways to split it up again. Have you ever thought of putting all the pieces back together and then telling the organizations to take a hike?

EH: It's easy for me to say that now because I have a lot of money. But if I didn't have the money, I'd want to get the belts. I wouldn't want to do that to the other fighters. It would be selfish on my part to say I don't need it, because I already have the notoriety of being the champion. But those other guys, the question is could they go on and make money without the belts. I was so glad to get that WBA [cruiserweight] belt after those 15 rounds I fought with Dwight Qawi.

The Ring: Overall, what's your take on the various boxing organizations?

EH: One way, you can see how the federations work, but on the other hand, you can see the crookedness. They don't have a system to their rankings. You've got a guy who gets ranked and has never fought nobody in the rankings. How does he get ranked? How does he become number two? I see people just jump into the rankings. On the other hand, I wouldn't want to be ranked and have the champion ducking me, either. I see a bigger picture, and in that picture every federation should have an explanation of how they rank, so that everybody can see how people get ranked. If they don't clarify that, then people are always gonna be mad. The whole thing is that if you ain't with the right people, it seems like you don't get ranked. You should only be in the top 10 after you've beaten somebody in the top 10. There's four promoters out there who are dominating, and if you ain't with one of them, you might never get an opportunity to fight in a championship fight. People just keep dancing around you the whole time. I was fortunate enough to be with Main Events, but I was ranked number one as a heavyweight for almost two years before I got a shot.

The Ring: Do you think boxing's political situation will ever improve?

EH: The whole thing is for people to continue to talk and come together. When you look at boxing, everybody is divided. You have to get the fighters, the promoters, and the TV people all together. People try to say that boxing is bad. But boxing is a sport, just like any other sport. You've got good people and bad people in boxing. You've got good people and bad people in every profession. The thing is, what are you gonna do about it? Are you gonna come together and make a stand? If everybody says they just want one champion, we should get the federations together, and say, "Hey, let's try to pull this thing together. We're gonna have one world champion." There can be all these other champions, but there can't be more than one world champion. You can be the Mexican champ, the North American champ, South American champ, and all that. But there can be nothing but just one world champ.

The Ring: You've been in the public spotlight to one degree or another since the 1984 Olympics. Did you notice a perceptible increase in your fame after you beat Mike Tyson the first time?

EH: We all have this perception of what we think we're gonna get when we win the world title. After a year and a half, I was the cruiserweight champion, and I was kinda let down. Here I was thinking I was the champion, and people were saying, "What is the cruiserweight belt? Mike Tyson's the man." So the whole thing is that you move up to the heavyweight division, and you're a contender, but not the champion; Mike's the man. But Mike got beat by Buster Douglas, and I beat Buster Douglas. And I thought, *Well, now I'm the man.* But no. You ain't the man. Tyson just had a bad day. Then everything I did, it was still kind of tarnished by Tyson. Then finally, when I beat Tyson, the whole world said, "He's the fighter. He's the man." One thing they realized is that this ain't no fluke. This guy beat him every round. He whupped his behind, *every* round, then he knocked him out. That first fight opened eyes all around the world. People who didn't even like boxing said, "That's Evander Holyfield. That's the one who knocked out Mike Tyson." When your popularity gets to a point where people who don't even like your sport recognize you, then you know you've crossed over. People might not even like boxing, but they know who you are.

The Ring: You've accomplished an awful lot—undisputed cruiserweight champion, three-time heavyweight champion, one of the highest-paid boxers in history. Do you think when people look back on your career that everything you've accomplished will be overshadowed by "The Bite"?

EH: No, I think that even with him biting me that people will remember how I handled it. Anybody else would have bit him back or done something worse. I just said that I forgive him. People also still remember what happened in the first fight.

The Ring: Is "The Bite" the first thing people always ask you about?

EH: No, they just ask if my ear is okay. I see them bending over (*Holyfield leans forward in his chair, imitating somebody craning their neck in order to get a better look at his ear).* The whole idea of being able to capture people's imagination is being able to do something that they believe they can't do. People will pay money to see somebody do something they can't do. They want to see you do something a little special. So an incident like that, they said, "Whoa, you're right. You're something different. I couldn't have done that."

The Ring: Is it true that after the first bite you told your trainer, Don Turner, "Put my mouthpiece back in. I'm gonna knock him out."?

EH: Yes, yes. They said, "Do you wanna stop it?" I told Don, "No, no, don't stop it. I'm gonna knock him out now. I've got him now." I realize that it was done out of frustration. People can't deal with frustration. The main thing they're

gonna do is quit. That's just life itself. It's a sickness. People get sick when they're getting ready to quit.

The Ring: When you're in the ring and the people start chanting your name, does it give you a rush?

EH: Well, you've got to take everything and use it to your advantage. The crowd yells, "Holy ... Holy" like they want you to go get him, but if you're not careful you're gonna get knocked on your butt. Just like in the Michael Moorer fight. When I knocked him down, everybody started chanting. But I knew that Michael Moorer was all right. I ain't gonna run back up on him. I've got to realize that they're just hollering. They're excited because they want you to go ahead and get it over right then and there. But they don't know that insecurity is what makes some fighters rush up on a man and allow that person to hurt him. I found that out my last three fights. You hurt him, but there ain't no sense in rushing. Take your time and you can take him out. You can get reckless and run into a punch. The crowd will make you do that if you ain't careful. Because if something bad happens, they're gonna blame you. Look what happened to Junior Jones (vs. Kennedy McKinney at Madison Square Garden). He had that crowd behind him ... "Get him!" And Kevin Kelley (vs. Naseem Hamed), the same way ... "Get him!" That crowd got behind them, but they ran out of gas because they let the crowd fuel them, too. But when you've boxed a long time, you realize that the crowd is there. That's fine, but you use that situation to help you, not work against you. Don't be foolish. I remember when Michael Moorer hit me with that first shot (in their second fight), the crowd went, "Yeah, Michael Moorer really gonna get him now." But I wanted him to rush me. The first fight, he was so careful, he wouldn't stand toe-to-toe. But every time he got close to me in the second fight, the crowd cheered louder and louder. You know what? He liked that. He was pleasing the crowd—and he got hit with an uppercut.

The Ring: When you're in the ring, right before the fight starts, you get a smirk on your face that I never see at any other time. What is going through your mind when you get that look on your face?

EH: You're having a dialogue with yourself. In your mind, you're thinking: *This boy thinks he better than me. I'm gonna whip his behind. I don't know why people think they're better than me, showing up here. He won that first fight, but he didn't know my shoulder was hurt then. My shoulder don't hurt now. I'm gonna tear him up.* And that's how I'm thinking. Even with Tyson, I was thinking: *Boy, you bullied them others, but you're gonna have a bad night tonight. You should be scared to show up here.* What people don't realize is that you're drawn toward how you think. A man is what he thinks. When you get in that ring, if you start telling yourself, "I don't know," anything can happen. The way I feel is that it don't make no difference what your size is, when you get in the ring, we're gonna see if you can really fight. It never made me no difference because I realize that certain things in life are gonna happen. You're gonna get hit. The point is, can you handle it? Most fighters don't like getting hit. Well, I don't like it, either, but the only way I can come back from getting hit is to hit him back. My thing is that if you hit me, I feel I've gotta hit you twice. You may act like it ain't hurting, but I know it's hurting. If you can take it, I'll hit you all night. You always have to think positive. You may hit a guy with your best shot, and he'll act like it don't hurt. But I know it hurts. If it don't make you fall, let's see how many more you can take. You've always got to encourage yourself not to stop punching.

The Ring: This inner-dialogue, was it always there, or is it something that developed as you matured as a fighter?

EH: My whole mentality changed when I was 18. When I turned 18, I realized I was a man. I realized that everybody has to put on their pants the same way I put on mine and they ain't no better than me. My attitude changed. That's when I started knocking people out. At first, I used to think I was a kid. When I had to fight somebody older, I would lose the fight just because they had a mustache. If the guy had hair on his chest—and I didn't—I would let the guy beat me because I would be scared and run from him. I used to tell myself, "He's got a mustache. He's got hair on his chest. I'm fighting a man!" In the amateurs, if I didn't knock you out in two rounds, I was going to run out of gas because I done wasted all my gas trying to get you. But when I got with Lou Duva and them, I developed a little more patience. My greatest fights have been my last three fights. The two Tyson fights and the second one with Michael Moorer. They were the first three times I ever relaxed totally.

The Ring: You don't even get butterflies anymore?

EH: No, I don't have butterflies. I have that nervous energy to a point where I feel like I want to explode. The whole thing in the locker room is like, "Come on, man. Come on so I can get out of here and get out of this cage to where I can feel comfortable." When I get in the ring, it's a relief. Then I feel good. I look at the people yelling. They all came to see the show. I know then that there ain't no way in the world this guy is gonna beat me. I already know. There ain't nothing to it. The only things that are gonna happen are what you let happen.

The Ring: How do you prevent a loss from spoiling your confidence?

EH: It's up to the individual. You can never get better if you never find out what you did wrong. Anytime you're not successful, you've got to acquaint yourself with what you did wrong. You have to ask yourself why. If you can't put those pieces together, the game is over for you. And if you didn't do anything wrong, but you still lost, it's time for you to get out of the game. The first time I lost to Riddick Bowe, I'd never been hit that many times and that hard in my whole career. That scared the daylights out of me because that boy done beat me up that bad. That was my first time ever taking a beating.

The Ring: Did you think about retiring after the first loss to Bowe?

EH: Yeah, yeah. I was ready to say, "Let me get on out of here." But when I saw the fight on TV, I said, "Hey, I was in this fight!" What blew my mind is how they scored it. They scored the fight lopsided, like Riddick Bowe just whupped me. Because when I saw it on tape, I saw that in the first two rounds the boy couldn't touch me. Then he tried to hit me low or hit me on the break, and all of a sudden I got mad and stood toe-to-toe with him. And when my eye swelled up, I couldn't move away. I had to continue to

fight that fight, and he got the best of it with his inside punching.

The Ring: The way you rallied back in the 10th round after Bowe had nearly stopped you was a memorable moment.

EH: When he hurt me, I realized that he was in trouble because this boy's gonna run out of gas, and I'm gonna bust him loose. But at the time I started to get him, the bell just happened to ring. But after watching the tape, I knew I'd fought the wrong fight. He beat me at his game. I knew that if I fight my game, he can't beat me.

The Ring: Why did you break up with Main Events, the promotional company that you'd been with since coming out of the Olympics?

EH: What happened was that Lou [Duva] and George Benton started talking about how "the boy got old overnight." And that hurt me more than anything. I don't have to make no excuses. Don't sit here and start telling people he didn't train like he should, he didn't work as hard. I work hard in everything I do. That really takes away from me as a person to say he didn't train hard. Then I heard that they said that I got a lot further than they thought I would anyway. That hurt my feelings. And they'd made all that money with me. What I did was went back and watched the Buster Douglas fight, and saw how everybody got excited and jumped on me like I'd won the lottery. I was the only one who wasn't jumping around. I worked hard; I was supposed to get this. So I sat back and said, "Well, forget that. I don't need no trainers and stuff who don't believe in me." So when I got Emanuel Steward, he said, "You just fought the wrong fight [against Bowe]. Them legs you've got, boy, if you were to use them, that boy can't keep up with you." I fought that second fight with Bowe, and I just moved and then fought him at the end, and I won the fight.

The Ring: Why did you and Steward part company after the success you had together?

EH: Okay, I'm back, and all of a sudden Emanuel Steward gets upset because he feels he should get more money. I told Emanuel Steward from the get-go that my career is halfway over; I can already fight. I just need somebody to remind me of the things I need to do. I ain't never gonna pay anybody more than $250,000 to train me. When my career is over, you still gonna be making money. A percentage is out. Ain't nobody gonna get no percentage of me no more. People look at boxers like we're supposed to be foolish. Emanuel agreed to the contract, but when I won the title, he said, "No, no, I want 10 percent." And when he said he was going with Michael Moorer, I knew that from that point on, that was it.

The Ring: How sick were you for the third Bowe fight?

EH: I was real sick. We got some seafood about three weeks before the fight, and all of a sudden I got sick. I thought I was taking too many vitamins. My doctor ran some tests, and he said, "You've got hepatitis." I'm like, "Hepatitis! What is hepatitis?" He said, "What you been doing?" I said, "What you mean, what have I been doing?" He said, "You been messing around?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, you've got hepatitis B. I think you should probably pull out of this fight." I'd already been training about eight weeks. You're talking about eight weeks and not getting paid. I said, "I'm gonna be okay." He said, "Well, you need your rest." I was so sick training, I hardly sparred. Every time I get hit, it hurts. When I got to Vegas, I felt better, but my body would spaz up and I'd get cramps. Tim [Hallmark, Holyfield's strength and conditioning coach] said I ought to pull out. I said, "No, I can't just pull out of the fight now."

I remember [New York *Daily News* columnist] Mike Katz asking me what was going to happen. I just said, "I'm gonna knock this boy out. The fight ain't gonna go no distance." I knew I was going to have to go out and just blast this guy. This prophet told me, "Evander, this is your fight to win, but there's a condition." I said, "What you mean?" He said, "You're gonna knock this guy down, but

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when you knock him down, you gotta stay on him. If your mind changes, and you don't stay on him, then you won't get this fight." I started laughing. I said, "What you think I'm gonna do? Knock him down and just look at him and laugh." The man told me the round and all that. The first round I came out, and I looked so good. But when I sat down on that stool, all the life went out. And every time the boy hit me in the stomach, it hurt so much I couldn't hold it. I went ... (*Holyfield grabs his belly and makes a groaning sound*). He was hurting me, but every time I swung, I was hurting him. But every time he hit me, it took me so long to recover. If I threw three punches, it would take me 15 seconds to recover. In 15 seconds, I'm getting tore up. Recovery time was so bad, I just prayed and prayed. But after the fifth round, I said, "Oh Lord, thank you. This is the round that I'm supposed to get him out." And I hit the boy with a hook—*bam*—and it dropped him. I thought the fight was over. He was still stumbling [after getting up] and I rushed up and threw two shots, but something in my mind said, "Boy, you know you're gonna get tired." So I pulled back.

The Ring: You should have listened to the prophet.

EH: There's always a test in your mind. But I didn't know my mind was going to start attacking me, saying stuff like, "You know you didn't work out. You know what's gonna happen." The whole thing was that I didn't want to run out of gas. Ends up, I get stopped.

The Ring: What's this about a possible fight with Frans Botha in South Africa?

EH: I just heard about it today. Actually, even when I went over to see Nelson Mandela, they were talking about how they would love to have a fight over there in South Africa to help mend the gaps. The Lennox Lewis fight would be a bigger fight, but they only want to pay me around the same amount I'd get for fighting Botha.

The Ring: Is 1998 going to be your last year in the ring?

EH: It appears to be. I think so.

The Ring: So we won't see you fighting in the next century.

EH: I hope not, but that doesn't mean that I won't. But I hope not.

The Ring: Why?

EH: I've got other things to do. Age is not a factor. It's just the fact that I can't let my kids get away from me. My oldest son is 13, and it takes more time with him now. I don't need to be chasing something that I've already got. I'm already heavyweight champion of the world. I've made enough money so that we can all live good and the grandkids can live good. There's no reason for me to go after more and more and more, even though I know that there ain't nobody out there who can beat me.

The Ring: Isn't it going to be tough to step out of the limelight?

EH: Things are as hard as you make them. The big thing with me is not about fame and all that. I love boxing. But how do you separate yourself from something you love doing? The only way to do that, not to be selfish, is to do it through somebody else. There are young guys out there. You just take interest and ask yourself how you can be part of the boxing game, but let them do the work, and I just do the talking. I think I'd like to promote. That's a way to give people an opportunity to be as good as they want to be. I know that I'll probably be part of the boxing game, and I can be happy watching somebody else eclipse my record.

The Ring: Ten, 20 years down the road, what do you visualize yourself doing?

EH: Definitely, I'll be in ministry. I'm a people person. I love people, and I like to see people do well. I like to see people overcome odds. But the most important thing is to try and prevent people from having a setback in the first place.

The Ring: You remarried this year. How has it changed your life?

EH: Not much. Whether I was married or not, I always wanted to live a married kind of life. I'm not the kind of person who wants 10 or 12 girlfriends, wants to be everywhere. I was always a homebody. I always knew that the most important thing in my life was to make sure my kids get a better opportunity than I did. They gonna be smart too. They're life isn't going to depend just on some sport. But even as they get a good education, they're gonna have a hard body, too. I tell my kids, people are insecure when they're not complete. You take an athlete. If he didn't go to school, when he's around somebody smarter than him, he feels he has to rough 'em up because he's insecure. But you take a man who has a good education, his insecurity might be that he has a weak body. So when he gets around an athlete, he feels that he has to prove he's smarter. But when you're complete, you have a strong mind and a strong body, and you can be in any area and be happy.

The Ring: When you were the age your son is now, did you ever dream things would work out so well for you?

EH: I always had high hopes. I knew that I was going to be successful, but I just didn't know what successful was. I just knew I wanted to have enough money to do some of the things I wanted to do. But if you put a price tag on success, when you make that much, you'll stop. But when you just say you want to be successful, you keep working. Because what is successful? When boxing is over, I've got to find something else, because that's the whole key to being happy—knowing that you're doing something and doing it well, and you're getting better and better. After boxing is over, I'll have to start all over again.

The Ring: Boxing has been extremely good to you. What do to say to people who criticize the sport?

EH: Boxing is not about having a bad attitude. It's about loving what you're doing and understanding that at the heart of boxing is always being in control of your emotions. I couldn't see myself getting in no street fight. I get paid to fight. I ain't fighting for free. If you bust my nose, I got paid well. If you scar me, I really got paid. Boxing is an art. It isn't something you play around with.

The Ring: If there was one more thing you'd like to accomplish, either in boxing or outside of boxing, what would it be?

EH: One thing I'd like to do is bring all people together. We are all people, regardless of our color. One thing that separates the unity is because people think color really makes a difference. They think it makes a difference in how well you can fight, how fast you can run, how high you can jump, how fast you can swim. They can't get past the color. They said, "Oh, that's a white sport" or "That's a black sport." They've already made their mind up because of skin color. That's one reason I kinda like old Prince

[Naseem Hamed]. The boy got money and he fights good. He ain't fighting because he got beat up by his parents. He does it because he loves the sport. He's not black. He's not white. He's an Arab, and they ain't known for having good fighters. So this shows that he's teachable. It proves a point to people. You get a good instructor and a person who follow directions, and you can be a champ, too. Why do black guys dominate? Well, if you've got good coaches training them, and this is the only choice they've got, they're gonna work harder.

Is my son gonna be a fighter? Oh, no. He's got more options. But if I had told my son that he's got no options, this is it—he would have done it, and he would have been good at it. The Prince had more options, but he knew that this is what he wanted to do, so he'll be just as good as another guy who says this is my only chance. If people could just get off of this thing, well if you're black, you have a reason to be good because of all the anger and bitterness. It was never that for me. I only started boxing because I liked the boxing coach. He was the only one who said positive things to me. You can be this, you can be that. I can? I came from a neighborhood where everybody was always negative, said you can't be nothing. My boxing coach said, "You can be the heavyweight champion of the world." He just happened to tell me that when I was eight years old, and I believed it. ■

Naseem Hamed

(Continued from page 39)

marveled Albert. "The atmosphere was fabulous. I can't say it was as electric as Ali-Frazier I, but it was similar. For one night, the Garden was special again. It was the place to be. It wasn't like the days when Emile fought at the Garden. Back then, everyone wore black ties. It was more formal. But this is a different generation."

Different indeed.

Although it was reported that HBO spent more than a million dollars marketing the Hamed-Kelley fight, the announced attendance was only 11,954. But HBO Sports Vice President Lou DiBella argued that a crowd of nearly 12,000 in a building that seats 20,000 for boxing was an accomplishment, especially considering that it was a featherweight fight and it was Hamed's first time boxing on U.S. soil.

There is no debating that those in attendance and the TV viewers at home were highly entertained. The two main events were thrilling affairs. There were six knockdowns in the Hamed-Kelley fight and McKinney rose from a third-round knockdown to stop Jones a round later. The crowd was enthusiastic, with a large segment traveling from England to support their hero. There were more Union Jacks waving in the Garden than quite possibly ever before. Chants of "NAH-SEEM, NAH-SEEM!" were drowned out by chants of "KEL-LEY," "KEL-LEY!" which in turn were drowned out by more chants of "NAH-SEEM!" Tom Loeffler, Kelley's manager, was quick to point out that his fighter also had something to do with the excitement.

"Kevin is very popular," said Loeffler. "Not only in New York, which is his hometown, but boxing fans all over the world appreciate the excitement he brings to a fight."

It is true that Hamed could not have had a better foil for his debut. He chose the toughest featherweight in the States and one of the most high-profile "little men" in boxing. In 1993, Kelley became the first featherweight since Salvador Sanchez to appear on HBO, and helped pave the way for the rest of the fighters under 135 pounds.

But before the fighting started, there was The Prince's much-anticipated ring entrance. In England, Hamed has danced on a platform that hung from the rafters of a soldout arena. He has taken up to 20 minutes to reach the ring. Here, where most boxing fans abhor anything in their sport that resembles the artificial glamour of professional wrestling, Hamed was asked to cut his entrance time in half. He did his best to comply, but still made it a protracted extravaganza.

"I don't think they should allow a fighter to take that long to get into the ring," said Albert. "I think people get tired of Hamed's shenanigans."

Albert's is a common stance taken among boxing purists, and the argument that it puts Hamed's opponents at a disadvantage certainly has merit. The fact remains, though, that Hamed is the star and the star dictates the terms. If his opponents lose focus during his entrance, perhaps they should focus on the lucrative purses that come with fighting The Prince (in Kelley's case, approximately $400,000). If the fans don't like it, they can buy a hot dog. But there was no rush to the concession stands on this night.

With blaring rap music, a runway, and smoke wafting to the ceiling, the Garden looked and felt like a mix between a fashion show and a rock concert. The fans, momentarily setting aside their thirst for fisticuffs, seemed to enjoy it. HBO commentator Larry Merchant said, "This is so silly, it's kind of great." His partner George Foreman added, "I like this. I really like it. This is what boxing needs."

Kelley had twice traveled to England to watch Hamed fight, so he was familiar with the self-indulgent ring walk. Yet as he paced the ring waiting, he was clearly annoyed at the inconvenience.

"We knew he'd take quite a bit of time getting into the ring," said Loeffler. "We knew what to expect. But that doesn't mean we were happy about it."

Kelley entered the ring to thunderous applause at 9:55 p.m. What follows is a chronological breakdown of the events that transpired from the moment Kelley ducked between the ropes until the start of the fight, 13 minutes 38 seconds later:

00:55—A silhouette of Hamed appears behind a white curtain. He is standing atop a white runway that is lined with light bulbs. Seconds later, the music begins and The Prince starts to dance. He swivels his hips and sways from side to side. He occasionally stops to shadow box for a few seconds and then resumes dancing.

02:59—Phil Borgia, Kelley's trainer, instructs his fighter to keep loose by hitting the punching mitts.

04:20—Hamed emerges from behind the curtain and confetti shoots into the air. Hamed begins to swagger and sway toward the ring. He stops briefly every few feet to admire himself and the crowd. Once satisfied, the strut and stroll continues.

04:47—Kelley stands on the ropes and shouts for Hamed to hurry up and get into the ring.

06:55—Hamed reaches the ring apron, gyrates some more, and places his hands on the top rope. New York State Athletic Commission inspector George Ward, unaware of Hamed's unique entrance, pulls together the third and fourth ropes, creating a space for Hamed to enter. Ward is called away from the ropes. Hamed, still holding the

top rope, somersaults into the ring and lands right in front of Kelley. The fighters stare each other down. Referee Benji Esteves separates them, and cutman Al Gavin puts a bearhug on Kelley to contain him.

08:55—Michael Buffer introduces the officials.

09:15—Hamed and Kelley are again separated by Esteves. Borgia also has to be restrained.

10:42—Buffer issues his trademark, "Let's get ready to rumble," and the crowd erupts.

11:47—The fighters are standing face-to-face. Suddenly, they are trash-talking, leaning forehead-to-forehead. Hamed pushes Kelley, and Borgia and Esteves rush between the fighters.

12:27—They are still face-to-face when Hamed is introduced. He defiantly thrusts his hands in the air.

13:38—The bell rings. Both fighters meet in center ring and launch wicked right hooks. They both miss.

Hamed began his U.S. debut by boxing in a more orthodox manner than anyone expected. His jab was quick and strong, and landed often in the opening 90 seconds. Both Hamed and Kelley are southpaws who frequently switch to righthanded stances. Yet, the opening moments of the fight were as close to textbook as these two fighters get. That changed quickly.

Prior to the fight, Kelley promised to go straight for Hamed's big mouth. He did. With just under a minute left in the first round, Kelley weaved out of a corner and landed a looping right on Hamed's chin, sending The Prince to the canvas. The crowd exploded in a chorus of cheers.

Suddenly, there was a feeling spreading through the Garden that Hamed was more style than substance. In the second round, Kelley landed a left hand and Hamed pitched forward, his gloves touching the canvas, preventing him from falling. Before Esteves reached the action, Hamed straightened himself, only to be hit with a right hand that, again, forced him to pitch forward and use his gloves to brace his fall. When Esteves arrived, he ruled a knockdown in Kelley's favor.

Full of confidence, Kelley was pursuing Hamed when a straight right dropped him on his backside at the center of the ring. There it was. Hamed, 29-0 (27), flashed his speed and power so quickly, even "The Flushing Flash" had to be impressed.

Kelley, 47-2-2 (32), slowed things down in round three, boxing smartly and scoring with his jab. But round four was right out of a Hollywood script. Three hard left hands dropped Kelley onto his side. He rose at six and was met by a blistering right from Hamed. Summoning his courage and power, Kelley landed a right hook that wobbled Hamed and caused his left glove to graze the canvas. Esteves correctly ruled a knockdown.

The Prince, though, was unhurt and eager to get at his antagonist. He connected with a leaping right hand and then momentarily backed off. Kelley walked in, and Hamed countered with a hard, short left that dropped Kelley on his back. The New Yorker tried to gather himself and appeared to beat the count, but Esteves stopped the fight as Kelley vaulted to his feet right at the count of 10.

It was over in slightly less than 12 minutes. Boxing fans in the U.S. hadn't been treated to such see-sawing fury in a major fight since, dare we suggest it? ... Hagler-Hearns.

Before the fight, Hamed compared himself favorably with all-time featherweight great Willie Pep. That analogy seemed inane after watching his poor balance and porous defense. Kelley clearly carved away a layer of Hamed's invincibility. When the Englishman fights, he abandons the very laws of boxing that Pep defined. His performances would make a ringmaster like Pep cringe. No, Hamed wasn't Pep. The Prince is not boxing royalty yet. But so what. Pep couldn't punch like The Prince.

What Hamed does have in common with the fighters of Pep's era is courage. The boxing world knew Kelley had the warrior's spirit, but wasn't quite sure if The Prince possessed the same trait. Well, he does. Kelley has scored some impressive knockouts in his 50-fight career, but each time Hamed was floored or hurt, he responded with a gritty determination that belies his lavish image.

With all the flamboyance that follows Hamed, it is easy to overlook what he does inside the ring. Yet, what he did in the Garden on December 19 was something that shouldn't be overlooked. He knocked out Kelley, which had never been done before. Yes, Kelley had been stopped once (by Alejandro Gonzalez in 1995). True, he had been down in the past. But no one has been able to keep him down or send him down so often. While Kelley placed the blame squarely on his own shoulders for not following his fight plan, that does not diminish Hamed's triumph. Kelley stepped into the ring as perhaps the most courageous featherweight of this generation. Hamed broke him down. Not scientifically, not elegantly, but in terms all fighters and fight fans understand. Hamed won the battle of wills.

When it was all over, Hamed said, "I wanted to cause so much excitement in this arena." He achieved his goal.

"The kid is a breath of fresh air," said DiBella. "We were thrilled. It was an incredible event. I think anyone who was at the Garden that night would buy a ticket for his next fight."

The who and when of Hamed's next fight had yet to be determined at press time. "The great thing is that there is no lack of great fights for him," said DiBella.

DiBella was overjoyed that Hamed generated a 10 rating on a Friday night, traditionally a harder night to sell boxing than Saturday. "Outside of the heavyweight division, that's the highest rating we've ever had for a fighter debuting on HBO," he reported.

Before Hamed continues with his six-fight, $12-million HBO contract, DiBella will speak with Hamed's promoter, Frank Warren, and representatives from SkyTV, the network that televises Hamed's fights in England. There was immediate talk of a Hamed-Arturo Gatti fight. DiBella considers that contest, though, to be a high-risk fight for The Prince, and it probably won't occur until later in the contract. If that fight does happen, and it depends on whether both fighters continue to win and whether Gatti can make 130 pounds in the future, DiBella said it is a big enough bout that it would be held at an outdoor venue somewhere in the United Kingdom.

For the immediate future, McKinney seems to be the leading contender in the Hamed sweepstakes. DiBella mentioned a scenario in which McKinney would meet Hamed in a doubleheader at the Garden that would include a match between Kelley and Jones. The winner of that fight would then face Hamed. McKinney certainly earned the right to meet Hamed by dispatching Jones. A Jones-Hamed fight was already in the works until McKinney upset

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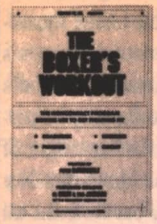

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Naseem Hamed

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the Brooklyn-based fighter.

"I think a Hamed-McKinney fight is the fight to make," said Albert. "We'd love it. I was so proud of McKinney. He showed the heart of a lion. That card would sell out the Garden, without a doubt. These two fights were fantastic. Everyone fought their hearts out. Anyone who saw the first show would come back to see the next one."

That seemed to be the overwhelming sentiment. The blaring music and flashing lights can be tolerated when fighters fight the way Hamed, Kelley, Jones, and McKinney did at the Garden.

"All I know is that I had a lot of fun on December 19," said DiBella. "Hamed finds a way to win and he finds a way to rile up the crowd. Whether you like him or hate him, you'll want to see him again." It's a new era in boxing. So what if Hamed-Kelley barely lasted longer than The Prince's ring entrance. They were both worth the price of admission. ■

Robert Cassidy, a frequent contributor to this magazine, is a freelance writer based in New York City.

New Faces

(Continued from page 16)

Watching other Main Events prospects Zab Judah and Fernando Vargas progress every day, Peden was left to sit and wonder how long it would take for his hand to heal.

Peden's first bout back came on November 4, 1997, against Jesse Gutierrez. It proved to be his toughest as a pro. Against Gutierrez, a two-time Texas Golden Gloves champion, Peden, his right hand still sore, lacked confidence. Yet he came out bombing with his right hand, anyway.

"I had to get in there and do something," Peden said. "I was hurting inside, and I had to do something. I knew that. I didn't want to disappoint Mr. [Lou] Duva and my trainers. Gutierrez was definitely my most challenging opponent. The kid could fight. He caught me with some good shots, and I hit him with some good shots."

Peden's relentless combinations and right crosses caused Gutierrez problems. The Aussie eventually won a four-round decision, and regained part of that positive outlook he had lost during his convalescence. A month later, Peden chopped up Darryl Baker, winning by four-round knockout.

"I had a pretty bad year," Peden said. "I was out for seven months and it was very frustrating. I saw Fernando and Zab, and I thought I was falling behind. Vernon Forrest suffered the same injury I did. He said the injury was a career blessing in disguise. I thought I'd have to take the same approach. I knew I could beat any junior lightweight out there, being 6-0, and knowing I could do it. I should be 12-0, and in a lot stronger position for a title fight."

Peden couldn't resist the lure of boxing. Boxing was in his blood. His father fought, as did his uncles. Growing up, he had tried rugby, but he was too small, often getting knocked around by bigger kids. He had a distinguished amateur career that began when he was 11 years old. He compiled a 130-15 record, winning five Australian national titles, holding to the same basic tenet he enters the ring with today.

"My dad always said when you walk into the ring, make it my ring," Peden said. "That's my domain. I carry myself up there and if you want to take it from me, try and take it from me. I go in to win—not to lose."

In 1992, Peden, at the age of 18, made the Australian Olympic team as a flyweight and advanced to the quarterfinal round. Four years later, Peden fought in Atlanta at the '96 Olympics, reaching the second round. Peden was among the top 10 amateurs in the world for six years, ranking from junior flyweight to junior lightweight. Soon after the '96 Games, Peden turned pro.

"Robbie's strong enough to fight 135, but I don't think he'll have any problems staying at 130 for at least another year, maybe a year-and-a-half," said Roger Bloodworth, Peden's trainer. "I met Robbie a year-and-a-half prior to the last Olympics. He was getting into the ring against guys who were 145, 146 pounds and he was taking their shots. He was a tough kid.

"Robbie had very good basics. I think right now he's good enough to fight 'The Prince' [Naseem Hamed], seriously. He can fight eight-round fights, but he has to learn to pace himself. Every fight he has he settles down a little more. By the end of next year, I think he'll be right there ready to fight for a championship."

Bloodworth said that Peden's style is similar to Vargas'. He has an excellent jab, is a good bodypuncher, and is very smart. Peden can move in and out, and sets up his punches well. The biggest transition from being an amateur, Bloodworth noted, was the tendency to rely on counterpunching and scoring with headshots. Now he's learning to hit the body better. He has considerable power in both hands, it's just a matter of knowing when to use it.

Peden refers to himself as a "boxer-puncher," with an ability to turn the intensity up when he has to. Peden admits that sometimes his emotions get ahead of him, which is one of the things Bloodworth constantly warns him about.

"I'm not scared of getting hit," said Peden. "You have to set your mind to take a shot. Once you're suspect about it, you expect yourself to go down. I go in there thinking no one can hit me."

Peden learns constantly by sparring with a pair of Main Events premier draws, Arturo Gatti and Pernell Whitaker, with the latter referred to by Peden as "the smartest man in boxing." Whitaker, Peden's idol, taught him a lot of trade tricks.

"You want to find out how hard I hit, just ask Arturo, he'll tell you," said Peden, who prefers the low-key, all-business approach to the ring as opposed to the flash-and-dash displayed by some of his contemporaries.

Keeping up with Peden outside the ring can be tough. He talks fast, even for an Australian, Bloodworth notes. But don't mistake his pleasant personality for a weakness. He's serious about what he's doing, even about dropping in weight in hope of getting a shot at Hamed. Peden said he was 8-0 as an amateur against fighters from England, and Bloodworth feels certain Peden can compete with Hamed. There's just one objective that throws Bloodworth off.

"For some reason," said Bloodworth, laughing, "Robbie has this goal to ride a bull one day. I don't know where that comes from."

Peden, however, is adamant.

"I'm riding a bull, I'm telling you it's one thing I want to do," he insisted. "Being from Australia, everyone thinks I want to wrestle crocodiles like Crocodile Dundee. I don't want to wrestle crocodiles, I'm not that crazy." ■

De La Hoya

(Continued from page 42)

was apparent Jones would not put his challenger away so easily; Griffin actually bullied him around throughout the next few rounds. Jones eventually scored a knockdown in the seventh and started to look like the 10-1 favorite he was supposed to be. But in the now-infamous ninth round, Jones let loose with a flurry of punches that forced Griffin to take a knee. Then the champ had a brain cramp. He nailed his defenseless foe with a right and a left to the head. Like something out of a Popeye cartoon, Griffin pitched forward onto the top of his head and crumpled to the canvas.

Although Jones was a controversial loser—he responded by stating he was merely trying to protect himself until tardy referee Tony Perez sent him to a neutral corner—he was, nonetheless, a loser via disqualification. But even if the fight had continued, Jones was not exactly cruising to victory. One judge had Griffin ahead by a point, the other two had him trailing by one and two points. Regardless of the outcome—even if Jones had eventually won and remained undefeated—the first Griffin fight raised two important questions, neither of which were commendable:

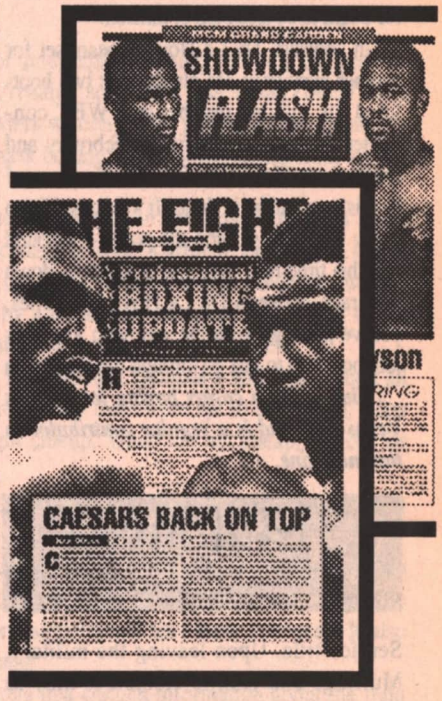
Did Griffin expose Jones? Or was Jones so uninspired when he fought Griffin that he was not prepared? Jones probably confirmed the latter when he destroyed Griffin inside one round in their August rematch. But maybe that was the worse of the two possible findings. After all, a fighter can always improve on technique, strategy, and even skill with the help of his trainer. Forcing a fighter to be motivated, however, is a difficult task tilting toward the impossible. Such determination and focus must come from within.

As of this writing, Jones had neither a fight contract for early-'98 nor an interesting opponent. After saying he would soon be relinquishing the WBC light heavyweight belt (rather than fight number-one contender Michael Nunn), he expressed an intention to move up to cruiserweight for one bout before progressing to heavyweight. Jones still has one fight left on an HBO deal that has not produced the memorable bouts for which the network had hoped.

"Roy Jones, as talented as he is, is a ripoff

(Continued on page 64)

Worldwide guide to pro boxing



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De La Hoya

(Continued from page 63)

job," Arum once said. "He doesn't want to test his ability against anybody with even a remote chance of beating him. As long as he's under that contract with HBO, he can practically pick his opponent to fight, and HBO can't say anything. It's a disgrace to himself. He ought to be ashamed of himself."

In contrast, De La Hoya appears set for another busy year. He already has two bouts lined up: against number-one WBC contender Patrick Charpentier in February and another, vs. Yory Boy Campas (in place of Norris), probably in June. It's impossible to know who will sit atop the pound-for-pound pile this time next year, but if it comes down to a race between De La Hoya and Jones, you've gotta go with the guy who loves his job too much to just go through the motions.■

Tim Graham covers boxing for the Las Vegas Sun and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

Mullings

(Continued from page 29)

Service title. Upon leaving the military, Mullings and Ruthie elected to stay in Fayetteville to raise their children.

Much of Mullings' patriotism, fortitude, and true grit can be traced to his parents. His mother, Olive, is a retired nurse, and his father, Leslie, is a maintenance man. Like so many before them, they emigrated to Brooklyn from Jamaica with their eight children in search of a better life. When they arrived in what many people consider the borough of dreams, Keith was just two years old. Their strictness and strong sense of family values enabled all of their children to become success stories, even though they grew up in an area where trouble was waiting on every corner.

Mullings' only brother is a corrections officer, one sister is a Georgetown University graduate, another is a professor at Baruch College, while another is a soldier in the Army. Mullings admits he was a bit mischievous as a child, but always knew there was a home to go to that was strict, fair, and loving. Those values, according to Ruthie, have enabled him to be a fine husband to her, as well as a parent to their children.

"Keith is the most compassionate, giving, generous man I ever met," she said. "He's got the greatest gift of gab and it takes so much to get him upset. He is just a great person, and a great fighter, too."

Ruthie even serves as a sort of unofficial scout for her husband. While he was giving Norris fits, she could not keep her eyes off Trinidad, who was sitting ringside. She says the look on his face was very telling. "His face kept saying that he couldn't overlook Keith," she said. "He looked concerned, even worried."

Both Rosenthal and Levitt are eager to match Mullings with Trinidad, De La Hoya, or anybody else that can reap a hefty dividend.

"When Keith beats Trinidad or De La Hoya, the people will stop saying his winning a title is a fluke," said Rosenthal. "He beat two world champions two fights in a row very decisively. As far as I'm concerned, that's no fluke. Keith has the potential to become a very dominant champion and stop all this talk about his successes being flukes."

"Keith can't lose at 154 pounds, it's that simple," said Levitt. "Norris was supposed to make $4.5-million to fight De La Hoya, so why shouldn't we make that? I'm sick of hearing all these excuses why he beat Marquez and Norris. After he knocks out Trinidad and De La Hoya, there won't be any more excuses. We are looking for $1-million to fight Trinidad. Keith certainly deserves that, although I just can't imagine why Trinidad would even want to fight him."

When you consider that prior to the $30,000 and $65,000 Mullings earned for Marquez and Norris, his career-high purse was $7,500, the numbers sound almost dizzying. Mullings is eager to fight anybody as long as it enhances his bank account significantly. He would love to take on De La Hoya, but won't disclose how he would fight him because "I might scare him off." Trinidad, he says, "is a good fighter, but I would be able to overpower him at 154 pounds." While the words might sound cocky on paper, they are anything but cocky when spoken from his mouth. His demeanor is far from bombastic. In fact, he more resembles a homespun, soft-spoken, small-town Southern preacher than a boxer. He gets his great sense of confidence from reading scriptures and calls himself a "non-denominational religious person" who is "as comfortable in a mosque as I am in a church." One source of his faith is the Story of Job, who he says, "endured a lot, but kept having faith through many trials and tribulations." Like Job, he adds, "I never have any doubts."

On December 9, Team Mullings visited Brooklyn Borough Hall, where the fighter was presented with a citation from Golden, who referred to him as "a real Brooklyn hero and role model, an exemplary champion because he is a great fighter and a great person." Naturally, Mullings said he was honored to be there and thrilled to be the source of such pride to a place he loves so dearly.

"Things never came easy for me, but things that are worthwhile never do," the fighter said. "But being from Brooklyn prepared me for anything. Even though I live in North Carolina now, I'll always be from Brooklyn. That's gonna make me pretty tough to beat." ■

Robert Mladinich is a freelance writer based in New York City and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Campas

(Continued from page 25)

A few days later in Tijuana, Campas was given a salute by the fans who had been loyal to him since he first fought there at age 15. Later, in his hometown of Novojoa, his wife and son waited along with a thousand people to give him another hero's welcome.

Campas' first title defense is scheduled for March 23. In the other corner will be Anthony Stephens, who lost to Marquez under controversial circumstances last April. If Campas is successful against Stephens, a match with De La Hoya could bring him the biggest purse of his career.

"I want to enjoy my belt for now," said Campas during the Christmas holiday. "I will start training for Stephens in early-January in Las Vegas, and after the fight we will see what happens. If the people want to see me fight De La Hoya, I will. But first things first.".

One thing is for sure. Campas will wear his indian headdress into the ring for the Stephens fight, and the shaman will be dancing, chanting, and wearing the deer head again. For the first time in his life, Yory Boy Campas will do something he's been dreaming of since he first went to the gym as an 11-year-old boy: enter the ring as the champion of the world. ■

Ricardo Jimenez is the sports editor of La Opinion, the largest Spanish-language daily newspaper in the United States.

BOXING COLLECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

By Don Scott

Collecting letters is a strange but revealing side of autograph collecting. While it can provide an insight into the writer's life, it is like, well, reading somebody else's mail. Many folks who collect autographs simply do not accrue letters written by the people whose signatures they would otherwise collect. But many folks who amass boxing stuff collect letters from boxers and others in the sport.

The ALS (autograph letters signed), which is a letter completely in the writer's hand, is much less likely to be a forgery or to have been done by a secretary or wife. There are exceptions. I have a nice letter, written in the first person, from Sonny Liston to a friend that was obviously written for him by his wife. I have another that was dictated by a blind Sam Langford that is one of the dearest pieces I own. But most letters were actually penned by the fighters themselves.

TLS (typed letters signed) can also be found. Gene Tunney, Jack Dempsey, and Jim Corbett all were prolific in this regard, and folks who got letters from these three were apt to save them. After all, who wouldn't want a letter from an ex-heavyweight champ. These are not cheap, but can be found.

The best ALS to find (and the most expensive at $2,000-plus) would be a letter from the great John L. Sullivan. I have seen five or so letters written by him, though I do not own one.

What makes a letter desirable? There are lots of factors. The ALS is much more desirable than the TLS. The rarity of the signature itself is the key, of course. I have a short letter written by "The Belfast Spider," Ike O'Neil Weir, that is only the second signature of his I have ever seen. It also helps if the letter is signed by the writer using his full name.

Then there's the content. The most desirable are letters that contain information about the fight game itself, since it is in that area we are most curious to know what the fighter thought. I have a letter from Denver Ed Smith that gives some details about the fight game in South Africa before 1900, making it a classic. Some of the Sullivan ALSs I have seen are concerned with the evils of drink, but others give John L.'s personal views of boxers, fights of the day, and his own career. The latter are much more desirable.

Exactly when the letter was written is also an important factor. It helps if it was written when the fighter was active. There is also, of course, the condition of the piece, and a nice letterhead helps. Collectors like to frame letters with pictures.

Length of the letter is actually not a factor, except where pertinent content is found throughout. In fact, one-page letters are more suitable for framing, and letters that have been written on both sides of a sheet are much harder to handle and display. I have a letter written by Marciano to his wife that is in pencil, written on both sides of the sheet, and not signed. It violates all the tenets of desirability except one: It has great content. I love it.

Speaking of framing letters, my suggestion is that you *not* frame a letter with a signed photo. In my opinion, that's overkill. Frame a letter with a vintage photo instead. Putting such items together can actually increase the overall value of the two, but putting more than one signature of the same person in a piece will not.

Also, do not forget letters from others in the sport: promoters, boxing writers—anyone connected with the sport can have interesting perspectives.

After all of this talk about the vintage fighters, you might assume that letters of only old-timers are worth much or are collectible. Not true. If you have a letter from a champ today, put it aside and know that it will always have a special place for you, and, one day, some other collector will cherish it as well. ■

Don Scott is editor and publisher of ***Boxing Collector's News*** *and may be reached at BCN, 3316 Luallen Drive, Carrolton, Texas 75007 or through* THE RING.

WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were complied as of November 1997, the WBC as of November 1997, and the IBF as of December 1997.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	–	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	C	C
Zeljko Mavrovic (CROA)	1	2	6
Ray Mercer (USA)	2	–	4
John Ruiz (USA)	3	7	–
David Tua (NZ)	4	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	5	5	–
Oliver McCall (USA)	6	–	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	7	12	–
Buster Douglas (USA)	8	–	–
Larry Donald (USA)	9	–	–
Axel Schulz (GER)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Corrie Sanders (SA)	13	3	–
Orlin Norris (USA)	–	4	9
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	6	–
Ike Ibeabuchi (USA)	–	8	10
Jerry Ballard (USA)	–	9	11
Adilson Rodriguez (BRA)	–	10	–
Vaughn Bean (USA)	–	–	1
Francois Botha (SA)	15	11	2
Hasim Rahman (USA)	24	–	3
Michael Moorer (USA)	12	–	5
Obed Sullivan (USA)	–	–	7
Chris Byrd (USA)	18	–	8

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	C	–	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	–	C	–
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	–	–	C
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	1	2	–
Johnny Nelson (GB)	2	–	–
Terry Dunstan (GB)	3	4	12
Jacob Mofokeng (SA)	4	12	3
Torsten May (GER)	5	6	8
Nate Miller (USA)	6	3	9
Alexei Ilin (RUS)	7	10	–
Yosukezan Nishijima (JAP)	8	–	–
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	9	–	–
Dale Brown (CAN)	10	–	–
Ezequiel Paixao (BRA)	–	1	–
Adopho Washington (USA)	–	5	–
Ken Murphy (USA)	–	7	5
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	–	8	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	20	9	4
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Uriah Grant (USA)	17	–	6
Adolpho Washington (USA)	–	–	7
Faustino Gonzalez (COL)	–	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	–	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	C	–
William Guthrie (USA)	–	–	C
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	5	–
Graciano Rocchigiani (GER)	2	–	5
Richard Frazier (USA)	3	4	8
Merqui Sosa (DR)	4	7	–
Montell Griffin (USA)	5	–	–
Muhammad Siluvangi (ZAI)	6	3	10
Ole Klemetsen (NOR)	7	6	6
Hisashi Teraji (JAP)	8	–	–
Fabian Chancelay (ARG)	9	–	–
Chris Eubank (GB)	10	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	1	3
Dario Matteoni (ARG)	16	2	–
Eddy Smulders (HOLL)	–	8	–
Richard Hall (USA)	29	9	7
Anthony Bigeni (AUS)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Will Taylor (USA)	26	–	4
Darrin Allen (USA)	–	–	9

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Robin Reid (GB)	C	–	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	C	–
Charles Brewer (USA)	–	–	C
Vincenzo Nardiello (ITA)	1	–	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	2	1	4
Jorge Castro (ARG)	3	–	–
Herol Graham (GB)	4	4	–
Dean Francis (GB)	5	–	–
Roberto Duran (PAN)	6	–	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	7	11	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	8	3	5
Richie Woodhall (GB)	9	–	–
Thulane Malinga (SA)	10	–	–
Mauricio Amaral (BRA)	15	2	3
Bruno Girard (FRA)	24	5	–
Francis Dean (GB)	–	6	–
Antoine Byrd (USA)	13	7	–
Leif Keiski (SWE)	–	8	–
Mark Baker (GB)	25	9	–
Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)	–	10	7
Antoine Byrd (USA)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Joseph Kiwanuka (UGA)	16	–	6
Reginaldo Andrade (BRA)	18	–	8
Reggie Johnson (USA)	–	–	9
Danny Trevino (USA)	–	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	1	–	–
Stephane Ouelette (CAN)	2	–	–
Robert McCracken (GB)	3	–	4
Paul Vaden (USA)	4	2	10
Julian Jackson (USA)	5	5	–
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	6	–	–
Otis Grant (USA)	7	–	–
Alex Zaitzev (RUS)	8	–	–
Kevin Palmer (USA)	9	–	–
Robert Allen (USA)	10	7	3
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	1	–
William Joppy (USA)	11	3	7
Peter Venancio (BRA)	–	4	–
Brian Barbosa (USA)	12	6	–
Anthony Andrews (GUY)	20	8	–
Giovanni Pretorius (SA)	–	9	8
Glen Johnson (USA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Antoine Echols (USA)	16	–	5
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	13	–	6
Abdula Ramadan (CAN)	–	–	9

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Terry Norris (USA)	C	–	–
Laurent Boudouani (FRA)	–	C	–
Raul Marquez (USA)	–	–	C
Felix Trinidad (PR)	1	–	–
Davide Ciarlante (ITA)	2	3	–
Ahmed Dottuev (BALK)	3	–	–
Javier Castillejo (SPA)	4	12	–
Tony Marshall (USA)	5	7	–
Robert West (USA)	6	–	–
Earnie Artango (AUSTRL)	7	–	6
Adrian Dodson (GB)	8	–	8
Keith Mullings (USA)	9	–	–
Kookyui Song (KOR)	10	–	–
Winky Wright (USA)	11	1	–
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	13	2	–
Tony Menefee (USA)	–	4	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	23	5	–
Robert McCracken (GB)	–	6	–
Pedro Ortega (MEX)	–	8	10
Jason Papillion (USA)	22	9	3
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	19	10	–
Anthony Stephens (USA)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Aaron Davis (USA)	–	–	4
Andrew Murray (GUY)	–	–	5
Yori Boy Campas (MEX)	–	–	7
Sergio Luciano (BRA)	–	–	9

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	C	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	–	C
Patrick Charpentier (FRA)	1	5	5
Derrell Coley (USA)	2	6	6
Wilfredo Rivera (PR)	3	–	–
Andrei Pestryaev (RUS)	4	–	–
Ariel Chaves (ARG)	5	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	6	–	–
Edwin Rosario (PR)	7	–	–
Maxim Nesterenko (RUS)	8	–	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	9	10	–
Vernon Forrest (USA)	10	–	7
Vacant	–	1	–
Andrei Pestraiev (RUS)	–	2	–
Jose Luis Lopez (MEX)	–	3	–
Oba Carr (USA)	–	4	12
Jeff Malcolm (AUSTRL)	–	7	–
Andrew Murray (GUY)	19	8	–
Juan Negron (PR)	27	9	–
Vincent Pettway (USA)	–	–	1
Mahenge Zulu (ZAI)	–	–	2
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	3
Hugo Pineda (COL)	–	–	4

Hitonon Sato (JAP)	–	–	8
Juan Negron (PR)	–	–	9
Walter Saporiti (ARG)	–	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Vacant	C	–	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	C	–
Vince Phillips (USA)	–	–	C
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	1	1	–
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	2	2	–
Ismael Chaves (ARG)	3	–	–
Rafael Ruelas (MEX)	4	–	–
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	5	4	5
Reggie Green (USA)	6	7	10
Jong Hoon Yuh (KOR)	7	–	–
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	8	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	9	3	2
Alfonso Sanchez (MEX)	10	–	–
Soren Sondergaard (DEN)	11	5	–
Frankie Randall (USA)	–	6	4
Virgil McClendon (USA)	–	8	3
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	–	9	–
Elio Ortiz (VEN)	–	10	–
Freddie Pendleton (USA)	–	–	1
Jan Bergman (SA)	12	–	6
Alex Carillo (COL)	–	–	7
Freddy Rojas (CHILE)	26	–	8
Terron Millett (USA)	–	–	9

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Steve Johnston (USA)	C	–	–
Orzubek Nazarov (JAP)	–	C	–
Shane Mosley (USA)	–	–	C
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	1	–	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	2	–	–
Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)	3	–	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	4	–	–
Daonai Sithkodam (THAI)	5	–	–
Jong Kwon Baek (KOR)	6	–	–
Billy Schwer (GB)	7	3	12
Marco Rudolph (GER)	8	–	–
Jimmy Rangel (COL)	9	–	–
Phillip Holiday (SA)	10	8	5
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	–	1	–
Eduardo Morales (ARG)	14	2	2
Ceppy Holman (INDO)	–	4	–
Leavander Johnson (USA)	–	5	7
David Dodi Tetteh (GHA)	12	6	11
Fred Ladd (USA)	–	7	9
Israel Cardona (USA)	–	9	3
Colin Dunne (GB)	–	10	–
Demetrius Ceballos (USA)	–	–	1
Justin Rowsell (AUSTRL)	–	–	4
Luis Flores (COL)	–	–	6
Acelino Freitas (BRA)	15	–	8
Wilson Palacio (COL)	26	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Genaro Hernandez (USA)	C	–	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	–	C	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	–	C
Robert Garcia (USA)	1	6	1
Anatoly Alexandrov (RUS)	2	7	–
Jesus Chavez (USA)	3	–	–
Djamel Lifa (FRA)	4	4	–
Justin Juuko (UGA)	5	–	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	6	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	7	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	8	–	–
Hector Lizarraga (USA)	9	–	–
Saul Duran (MEX)	10	–	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	1	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	2	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	3	–
Tom Johnson (USA)	–	5	4
Harold Warren (USA)	19	8	2
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	–	9	–
Koji Matsumoto (JAP)	–	10	–
Jaime Rangel (COL)	–	–	3
Ramon Ledon (CUBA)	–	–	5
Tracy Patterson (USA)	–	–	6
Barry Jones (GB)	27	–	7
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	12	–	8
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	17	–	9
Tsutomu Yasuda (JAP)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	C	–	–
Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Carlos Rios (ARG)	1	2	–
Cesar Soto (MEX)	2	–	10
Paul Ingle (GB)	3	12	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	4	–	–
Mehdi Labdouni (FRA)	5	–	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	6	–	–
Steve Robinson (GB)	7	–	–
Dramane Nabaloun (BKF)	8	9	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	9	–	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	10	3	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	1	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	–	4	5
Frederic Perez (FRA)	–	5	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	28	6	6
Victor Polo (COL)	–	7	3
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	26	8	8
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	10	–
Hector Lizarraga (USA)	–	–	1
Welcome Ncita (SA)	–	–	2
David Santos (USA)	–	–	4
Jesus Chavez (USA)	–	–	7
Teofilo Carranza (PER)	–	–	9

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	–
Vuyani Bungu (SA)	–	–	C
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	1	–	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	2	2	–
Reynante Jamili (PHIL)	3	–	7
Spencer Oliver (GB)	4	6	3
Welcome Ncita (SA)	5	–	–
Michael Brodie (GB)	6	–	–
Jose Luis Bueno (MEX)	7	–	–
Kennedy McKinney (USA)	8	4	2
Pastor Maurin (ARG)	9	–	–
John Lowey (IRE)	10	–	–
Rafael Del Valle (PR)	–	1	–
Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)	14	3	–
Carlos Barreto (VEN)	–	5	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	7	–
Bong Chul Kim (KOR)	12	8	–
Serge Poilblan (FRA)	22	9	–
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	25	10	12
Victor Llerena (COL)	–	11	1
Nurhuda (INDO)	–	–	4
John Johnson (USA)	–	–	5
Anell Barotillo (AUSTRL)	–	–	6
Ariston Clayton (USA)	24	–	8
Esteban Morales (COL)	29	–	9
Ernesto Gray (COL)	–	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Siromongkol Singmanasuk (THAI)	C	–	–
Nana Konadu (GHA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Paul Ayala (USA)	1	3	–
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)	2	–	–
Jorge Monsalvo (COL)	3	–	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	4	–	7
Victor Rabanales (MEX)	5	–	–
Danny Romero (USA)	6	–	–
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	7	–	5
Gerardo Martinez (MEX)	8	11	–
In Jin Chi (KOR)	9	–	–
Masahiko Nakamura (JAP)	10	–	–
Abraham Torres (VEN)	–	1	–
Lukhin CP Gym (THAI)	–	2	–
Daorung C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	4	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	–	5	–
Yong Hoon Lee (KOR)	–	6	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	11	7	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	14	8	–
Sahoiu Phaisarn Gym (THA)	–	9	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	21	10	–
Adrian Kaspari (INDO)	–	–	1
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	2
Jesus Perez (COL)	19	–	3
Juan Sanchez (COL)	–	–	4
Shaszi Nitta (JAP)	–	–	6
Fernando Montilla (PHIL)	–	–	8
Rafael Del Valle (PR)	–	–	9
Ancee Gedeon (USA)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	C	–	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	C	–
Johnny Tapia (USA)	–	–	C
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	1	6	–
Luis Bolanos (COL)	2	–	–
Veeraphol Sahaprom (THAI)	3	4	–
Luis Benavides (COL)	4	–	12
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	5	–	–
Raffy Montalban (PHIL)	6	–	–
Jose Rafael Sosa (ARG)	7	–	–
Young Joo Cho (KOR)	8	–	–
Adonis Cruz (NIC)	9	–	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	10	9	–
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	1	–
Satoshi Iida (JAP)	–	2	–
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	3	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	30	5	–
Andy Agosto (PR)	–	7	4
Edicson Torres (VEN)	–	8	–
Ratanachai Sor Voraphin (THAI)	16	10	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	1
Ubadel Soto (COL)	–	–	2
Sombak Singchawan (THAI)	–	–	5
Juvenal Berrio (COL)	–	–	6
Jaji Sibali (SA)	–	–	7
Solo Ikeda (JAP)	–	–	8
Rodolfo Blanco (COL)	15	12	9
Joel Luna (MEX)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	C	–	–
Jose Bonilla (VEN)	–	C	–
Mark Johnson (USA)	–	–	C
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	1	–	–
Yuri Arbachakov (RUS)	2	3	7
Yong Soon Chang (KOR)	3	–	–
Raul Juarez (MEX)	4	8	–
Arthur Johnson (USA)	5	4	1
David Guerault (FRA)	6	–	12
Isaias Zamudio (USA)	7	–	–
Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)	8	7	–
Adey Lewis (GB)	9	–	–
Oscar Arciniega (MEX)	10	–	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	1	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	–
Evangelino Perez (PAN)	–	5	–
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	6	3
Miguel Martinez (MEX)	–	9	–
Will Grigsby (USA)	18	10	5
Vacant	–	–	2
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	4
Yodchingchai Sornthong (THAI)	–	–	6
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	12	–	8
Ilido Julio (COL)	–	–	9
Luis Cox (PER)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	C	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Ladislao Vazquez (MEX)	1	–	–
Yosam Choi (KOR)	2	12	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	3	2	3
Kaaj Chartbandi (THAI)	4	–	–
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	5	6	–
Phanieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	6	–	–
Gabriel Munoz (MEX)	7	–	–
Edgar Cardenas (MEX)	8	–	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	9	7	–
Sandre Oviedo (ARG)	10	–	–
Hadao C.P. Gym (THAI)	–	1	–
Carlos Murillo (PAN)	–	3	11
Suzuki Kabato (JAP)	–	4	–
Yong Jin Kim (KOR)	12	5	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	16	8	–
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	–	9	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	–	10	–
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	1
Manuel Jesus Herrera (DR)	–	–	2
Oswaldo Guerrero (MEX)	–	11	4
Onewin Chareon (THAI)	–	–	5
Nelson Dieppa (PR)	–	–	6
Gill Ikeda (JAP)	–	–	7
Takashi Shiohama (JAP)	–	–	8
Jesus Chong (MEX)	–	–	9
Hernan Berrio (COL)	–	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	C	–	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	C	–
Ratanapol Sow Voraphin (THAI)	–	–	C
Rocky Lin (JAP)	1	1	5
Payak Nakornluang (THAI)	2	–	–
Carmelo Caceres (PHIL)	3	–	8
Kermin Guardia (COL)	4	8	–
Mongol Charoen (THAI)	5	–	12
Lindi Memani (SA)	6	11	–
Domingo Guillen (DR)	7	–	–
Myung Sup Park (KOR)	8	–	–
Sang Chul Lee (KOR)	9	–	–
Lee Sandoval (NIC)	10	10	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	2	–
Ronnie Magramo (PHIL)	–	3	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	–	4	–
Satoru Abe (JAP)	22	5	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	6	–
Wondee Charoen (THAI)	–	7	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	–	–	2
Faisol Akbar (INDO)	25	–	3
Ala Villamor (PHIL)	–	–	4
Juan Herrera (COL)	–	–	5
Luis Lazarte (ARG)	–	–	6
Boy Ikeda (JAP)	–	–	7
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	–	9
Carlos Eluaiza (ARG)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

THE HISTORY OF CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS

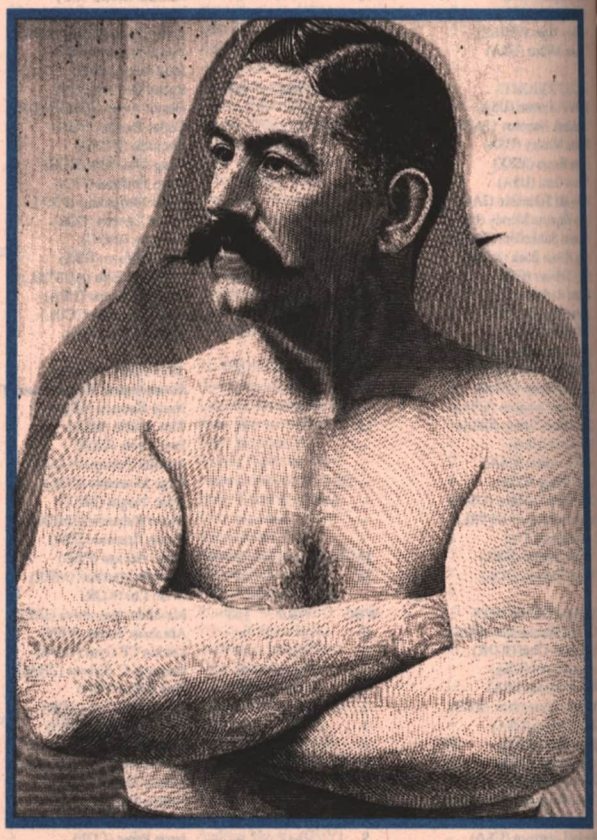
Tom Cribb's belt was the first documented, John L. Sullivan's stirred the most controversy

By Sam Andre

(Editor's note: This is a condensed version)

Soon after the presentation of THE RING's 267th championship belt to Alexis Arguello by editor Nat Loubet at a Madison Square Garden luncheon, a question arose concerning the recipient of THE RING's first belt.

Since THE RING *Encyclopedia* lists names only of the champs awarded the belt since 1952, a search through THE RING files shows that the late Nat Fleischer, founder and editor, presented Jack Dempsey with the first championship belt in September of 1921 following Dempsey's four-round knockout of Georges Carpentier on July 2, at Jersey City, New Jersey. Further research reveals that England's Tom Cribb was the first champion on record to whom a belt was presented, after defeating Jem Belcher 168 years ago.



Heavyweight John L. Sullivan captured the American public's imagination. To pay tribute to their hero, the people of Boston contributed $8,000 for a championship belt to be awarded to "The Boston Strong Boy."

There were many battles in which a belt was involved, but none could match the exciting saga of the most famous pugilistic belt of all—the John L. Sullivan diamond belt.

In 1887, John L.'s popularity was at its height. It was a time when boxing was the main topic in sports; baseball was struggling to draw fans and football was running a distant third in recognition. Throughout the country and parts of the world, the 29-year-old "Boston Strong Boy" was considered invincible. He had compiled a sensational record, won the American bare-knuckles title in 1882 when he annihilated Paddy Ryan at Mississippi City, Mississippi, and was preparing a tour of the country.

Aware of Sullivan's popularity, Pet Sheedy, a flamboyant promoter from New York, mapped out an exhibition tour that opened in Racine, Wisconsin, on March 28, went through the Northwest, and down the Pacific Coast. Before leaving, Sheedy and a few Boston sporting men conceived the idea

From THE RING, October 1977

The John L. Sullivan championship belt was made of 12-karat gold and was studded with 397 diamonds and other precious stones. After a long search by former Ring editor Nat Fleischer, it was finally discovered that this beautiful piece of workmanship had been melted down for its value in gold.

for a trophy to be sponsored by the people of Boston and presented to their native son. Two Boston jewelers were asked to prepare a design for an outstanding championship belt.

A month after the tour had started, Sheedy returned to Boston and advised the jewelers to start working on the belt they said would take three months to complete. Next, Sheedy agitated the belt scheme through Boston's sports pages. It caught on at once. Captain Cook, editor of *The Police News*, *The Police Gazette's* rival publication, started the ball rolling with $200. In the final counting the contributions came to slightly over $8,000.

The belt started as a 12-inch square of 12-karat gold weighing about 2,800 pennyweights. Rolled out it became the largest piece of flat gold ever seen at that time. It was then fashioned into a belt 48-inch long, 10½" tall and studded with 397 diamonds and other precious stones. The design represented the boxing ring with eight gold posts, through which ran three gold ropes. Between each two posts was a gold plate held in position by the ropes.

The center plate was surmounted with a large wing-spread eagle, with American, British, and Irish flags on either side. The inscription read "Presented to the Champion of Champions, John L. Sullivan, by the citizens of the Unites States, July 4, 1887." The champion's name was set with 250 diamonds, a large diamond was set below the eagle, and others distributed within stars on each plate. Inscribed on the back of the center plate were the names of 35 prominent persons.

The smaller plates on each side consisted of colorful enamel displays of the shield of the United States, characteristic fighting poses of John L., and an Irish harp. On the left panel, a formal photo of Sullivan, on the right, a photo of Sheedy. All panels were cluttered with the remaining diamonds. Officially the belt was valued at $8,000, but soon afterwards it became known as "Sullivan's $10,000 diamond belt."

It was a dazzling piece of workmanship and worthy of a champion.

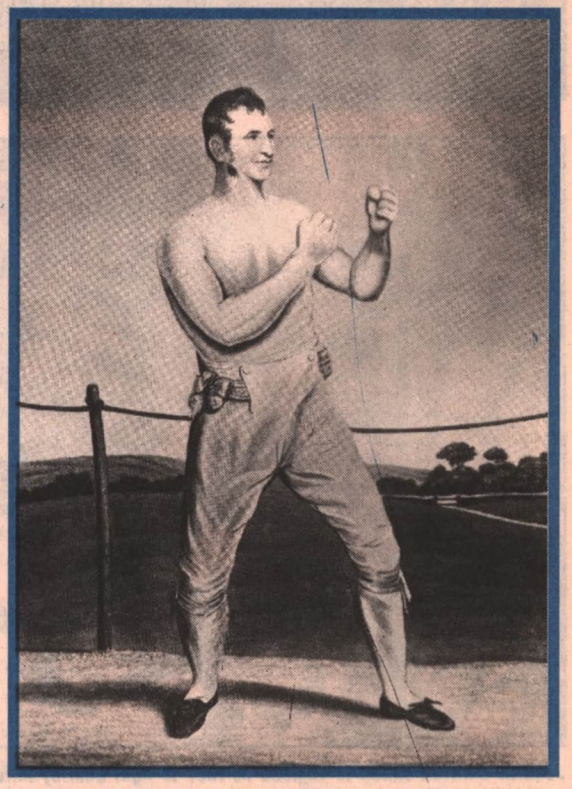
On August 8, 1887, over 4,000 admirers of this great champion overflowed the old Boston Theatre to pay him homage. The huge stage was occupied by 200 notables representing the state and city governments and various sports celebrities.

The gift of the sporting public to its greatest idol had two meanings for Sullivan. First, it was the world's most beautiful and costly pugilistic belt that belonged only to him and was not to be fought for and turned over to any possible victor. Second, it put to shame the heavyweight championship belt that Richard J. Fox, publisher of *The Police Gazette*, presented to Jake Kilrain, a powerful heavyweight who had not won a major fight. During Sullivan's acceptance speech, he raised the famous belt over his head and said, "Alongside this one, the *Police Gazette* belt is just a dog collar."

On October 27, The Boston Strong Boy sailed for an extended exhibition tour of England to accommodate any British fighters abroad "who think they can lick me," as Sullivan put it. He meant Jem Smith, the British champ, and especially "that loud mouth, Charley Mitchell." Aboard the S.S. Cephalonia was Harry S. Phillips, his new manager, and the diamond-studded belt.

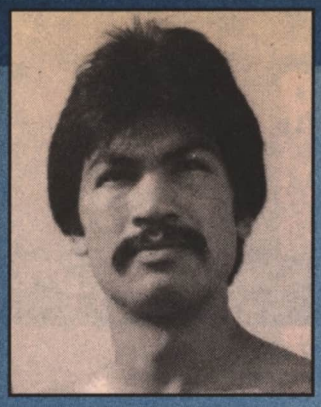
Upon his arrival in Liverpool, it seemed as if all of England had turned out to cheer him. All except the customs officers who demanded $600 import duty for the belt. When John L. refused, it was temporarily bonded in the Queen's warehouse for safekeeping.

Sullivan carried the belt in a long velvet



Tom Cribb, England's 19th boxing champion, was the first champ to ever receive a championship belt.

THE RING RATINGS, October 1977



Carlos Palomino

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Muhammad Ali, Chicago, IL
1. **Jimmy Young,** Philadelphia, PA
2. **Ken Norton,** San Diego, CA
3. **Larry Holmes,** Easton, PA
4. **Ron Lyle,** Denver, CO
5. **Earnie Shavers,** Warren, OH
6. **Duane Bobick,** Bowlus, MN
7. **Howard Smith,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **Johnny Boudreaux,** Houston, TX
9. **Stan Ward,** Sacramento, CA
10. **Alfio Righetti,** Italy

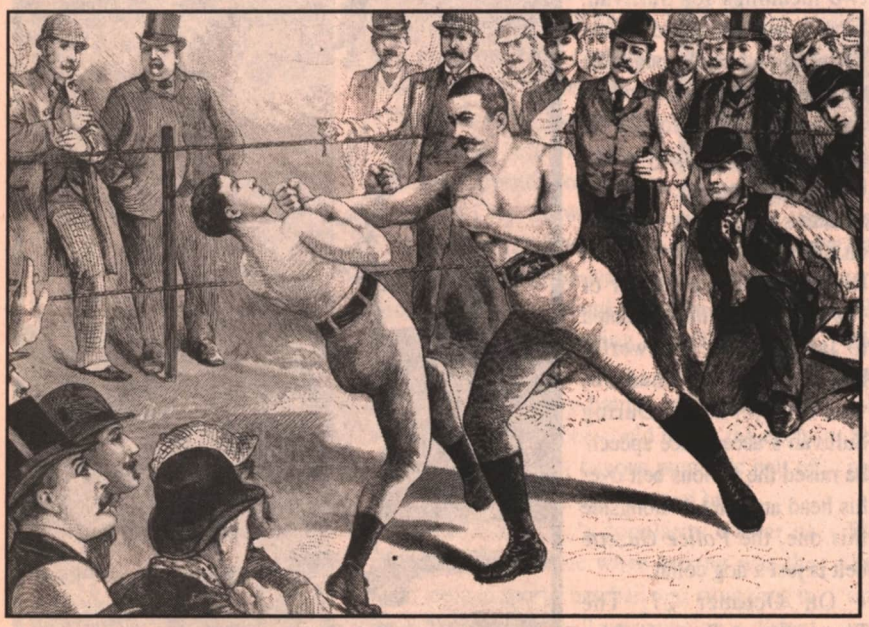
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Victor Galindez,** Argentina
2. **John Conteh,** England
3. **Miguel Cuello,** Argentina
4. **Richie Kates,** Brighton, NJ
5. **Bobby Cassidy,** Brentwood, NY
6. **Vonzell Johnson,** Kalamazoo, MI
7. **Mike Rossman,** Turnersville, NJ
8. **Jesse Burnett,** Los Angeles, CA
9. **Alvaro Lopez,** Stockton, CA
10. **Len Hutchins,** Detroit, MI

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Monzon, Argentina
1. **Mike Colbert,** Portland, OR
2. **Rodrigo Valdes,** Colombia
3. **David Love,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Bennie Briscoe,** Philadelphia, PA
5. **Ronnie Harris,** Akron, OH
6. **Vito Antuofermo,** Italy
7. **Alan Minter,** England
8. **Bobby Watts,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Marvin Hagler,** Brockton, MA
10. **Casey Gacic,** Cleveland, OH

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Eddie Gazo, Nicaragua
1. **Maurice Hope,** England
2. **Miguel Angel Castellini,** Argentina
3. **Alvin Anderson,** Baltimore, MD
4. **Ayub Kalula,** Uganda
5. **Elisha Obed,** Nassau, Bahamas
6. **Eckhard Dagge,** Germany
7. **Rocky Mattioli,** Australia
8. **Frank Wissenbach,** Germany
9. **Billy Backus,** Syracuse, NY
10. **Joel Bonnetaz,** France

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Palomino, Mexico
1. **Pete Ranzany,** Sacramento, CA
2. **Jose Cuevas,** Mexico
3. **Randy Shields,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Harold Weston,** New York, NY
5. **Floyd Mayweather,** Detroit, MI
6. **Armando Muniz,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **Clyde Gray,** Canada
8. **Jose Palacios,** Mexico
9. **John Stracey,** England
10. **Johnny Grant,** Washington, D.C.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wilfred Benitez, Puerto Rico



John L. Sullivan sailed to England in 1887 to fight Charley Mitchell, taking along his diamond-studded belt. The fight took place in Chantilly, France, and went 39 rounds before it was called a draw. Both fighters were arrested after the fight.

lined box, and had intended to display it wherever British crowds gathered. Perhaps it was fortunate the belt was in the warehouse, for his train was robbed at every stop from Liverpool to London, causing it to arrive many hours later.

At his first exhibition before British boxing officials at St. James Hall, Mitchell taunted Sullivan with snide remarks. John L. was so riled he signed for a match on Mitchell's terms: a bare-knuckles fight to a finish in a 24-foot ring on turf, according to London Prize Ring Rules. The fight took place on a rainy afternoon, March 10, 1888, at Chantilly, France, on the estate of Baron Rothschild before a few trusted people from both sides.

Mitchell's plan was to fall continuously, even without being hit, so that when Sullivan showed signs of fatigue, he could come on strong for the kill. As the rain continued, the bout became slower and it

1. **Shengsak Muangsurin**, Thailand
2. **Antonio Cervantes**, Colombia
3. **Miguel Montilla**, Dominican Republic
4. **Monroe Brooks**, Los Angeles, CA
5. **David Green**, England
6. **Laurie Austin**, Australia
7. **Hector Thompson**, Australia
8. **Nani Marrero**, Dominican Republic
9. **Saoul Mamby**, New York, NY
10. **Joe Kimpuani**, Zaire

LIGHTWEIGHTS

World Champ: Roberto Duran, Panama

1. **Esteban DeJesus**, Puerto Rico
2. **Edwin Viruet**, Puerto Rico
3. **Vilomar Fernandez**, Dominican Republic
4. **Vicente Saldivar**, Mexico
5. **Hector Medina**, Dominican Republic
6. **Perico Fernandez**, Spain
7. **Josue Marquez**, Puerto Rico
8. **Giancarlo Usai**, Italy
9. **Antonio Guinaldo**, Spain
10. **Andrew Ganigan**, Hawaii

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

World Champ: Samuel Serrano, Puerto Rico

1. **Alfredo Escalera**, Puerto Rico
2. **Alexis Arguello**, Nicaragua
3. **Rafael Limon**, Mexico
4. **Walter Seeley**, Sayville, NY
5. **Ben Villaflor**, Philippines
6. **Apollo Yoshio**, Japan
7. **Blakeney Matthews**, South Africa
8. **Ezquiel Sanchez**, Dominican Republic
9. **Bobby Chacon**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Roy Hernandez**, Corpus Christi, TX

FEATHERWEIGHTS

World Champ: Vacant

1. **Danny Lopez**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Ruben Castillo**, Bakersfield, CA
3. **Lionel Hernandez**, Venezuela
4. **Yum-Dong Kyun**, South Korea
5. **Pedro Jiminez**, Spain
6. **David Poison Kotey**, Ghana
7. **Rafael Ortega**, Panama
8. **Jose Cervantes**, Colombia
9. **Rodolfo Martinez**, Mexico
10. **Richard Rozelle**, Columbus, OH

BANTAMWEIGHTS

World Champ: Alfonso Zamora, Mexico

1. **Carlos Zarate**, Mexico
2. **Wilfredo Gomez**, Puerto Rico
3. **Eusebio Pedroza**, Panama
4. **Sean O'Grady**, Oklahoma City, OK
5. **Robert Ruvaldino**, Mexico
6. **Franco Zurlo**, Italy
7. **Rual Tirada**, Mexico
8. **Alberto Davila**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Frank Duarte**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Castro Mario Lopez**, Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS

World Champ: Miguel Canto, Mexico

1. **Gutty Espadas**, Mexico
2. **Luis Estabe**, Venezuela
3. **Yoko Gushiken**, Japan
4. **Jorge Lujan**, Panama
5. **Juan Gusman**, Dominican Republic
6. **Alfonso Lopez**, Panama
7. **Betulio Gonzalez**, Venezuela
8. **Juan Alvarez**, Mexico
9. **Al Sandoval**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Patrick Mambrwe**, Zambia

was getting dark. After three hours sloshing in the mud, with Mitchell down 38 times, both sides agreed to a draw at the start of the 39th round.

After the battle, the fighters were arrested by French police and jailed. Mitchell served a couple of days, but Sullivan forfeited his bond, returned to England where he recovered his diamond belt, and sailed for America.

Mitchell's backers were so certain he would have defeated Sullivan had the fight continued, they engaged the firm of Mappin and Webb to design a massive belt in his honor. The finished product, containing 300 ounces of pure sterling silver and weighing 17½ pounds, consisted of 11 small panels and three large ones with colored enamel flags of the United States and Britain, and is embossed with the heads of Sullivan, Mitchell, an eagle, and a lion. Mitchell brought the belt to the United States, and it was on exhibition during his various tours. Americans were not impressed; there was only one belt—John L's.

Richard K. Fox, publisher of The Police Gazette, presented heavyweight Jake Kilrain with a belt, despite the fact that Kilrain never won a major fight. Sullivan said of his own belt, "Alongside this one, The Police Gazette belt is just a dog collar."

Ted Broadribb, a popular British fight manager, bought the Mitchell belt in 1924 from Sir Harry Preston who had auctioned it off at a charity affair at Brighton for $2,000. Two years later, editor Nat Fleischer purchased it for the same amount from Broadribb and placed it in THE RING Museum, where it has been on display since.

John L.'s proudest possession was the diamond belt. Whatever his failings, including an enormous capacity for

whiskey and the joy of spending his money, he considered the belt the greatest of all ring trophies and it was never out of his possession, even after he lost the title he held for 10 years to Jim Corbett at New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 7, 1892.

Around 1895, Sullivan began loaning his belt to old friends for exhibition purposes. The belt was passed around quite often, and slowly diamonds began to disappear. Legend has it that Sullivan, when in need of quick money, would pick out a few diamonds to sell.

During the period, Sullivan was touring the country making a lot of money. His tour in 1885 netted him $85,900, in 1896 it was $91,000 and the next two years, $67,300. Though he spent it almost as soon as he earned it, money was available; therefore, it is more likely that some so-called "old pals" were the first to pick out a few diamonds.

Sullivan seemed to have lost interest in the belt after it was returned to him early in 1899 minus some diamonds. Finding himself in need of cash after a drinking binge, he borrowed $5,000 from a Boston pawnbroker, for the first time. The second time, with more diamonds missing, he was loaned $3,000. It was pawned twice more for the same amount, later to be regained by Sullivan or his friends.

In 1900, the belt was pawned in New York for $2,000. Bill Muldon, a wrestling champion and trainer for John L.'s fierce 75-round championship bare-knuckles fight with Jake Kilrain in 1889, redeemed the belt and returned it to Sullivan, who had possession of his famous belt for the last time.

Interviewed on his farm at North Abington, Massachusetts, in 1917, Sullivan's last recollection of the belt was that it was lost or stolen somewhere in the midwest. "The shop which was showing it," he said, "was broken into and the belt stolen." On February 2, 1918, John L., a beefy old man of 57, died of a heart attack.

Now it was 1931. It was the heavyweight era of Max Schmeling, Jack Sharkey, Young Stribling, Primo Carnera, Max Baer, and a strong, promising 23-year-old heavyweight, Ernie Schaaf.

Born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Schaaf adopted Boston as his home. Somehow, an idea developed in Boston to locate Sullivan's famous belt, shine it up, and present it to Ernie as another John L. in the Boston Irish championship tradition. The fact that Ernie was of German stock didn't matter.

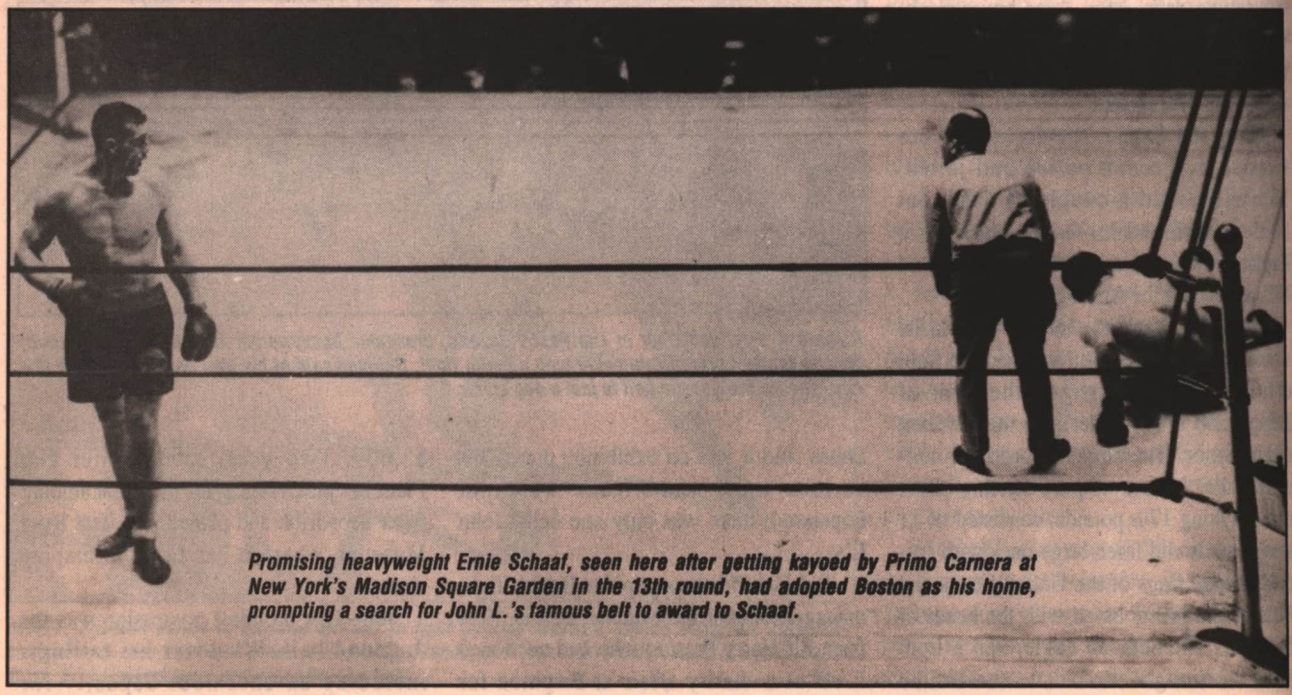
The idea was great up to a point—there was no Sullivan belt. It had disappeared.

George "Doc" Almy, boxing writer for *The Boston Post*, followed every possible lead available in search of the belt in the Boston area, but always drew blanks. Exhausted, Almy contacted Fleischer at New York's Madison Square Garden for help. Since 1922, when Fleischer first dreamed of buying the famous belt for the future RING Museum, he traced every possible clue that might lead him to the owner. Finally, in 1926, Fleischer followed a lead that paid off. He went to Baltimore with a large and sharp photograph (now in the RING Museum) of the original belt to meet his contact. In the RING files, an obscure folder contained the following, written by Fleischer:

"Back in 1926, a chap named Ed McGuire in Baltimore, owned the belt, but would not discuss how he got it. He said he had sold it to an 'old gold' junk dealer in that City whose name I do not recall. I tried hard to purchase it from the dealer. I offered him $500, but he wanted $2,000, and I could not afford it. My offer was all the money I owned after having bought the Charley Mitchell belt a few weeks earlier.

"Someone had told the dealer if he had it melted at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he would get far more out of it in the value of gold. I told him it would be a shame to destroy such a relic. He wanted time to think it over.

"Shortly afterward, I returned to Baltimore after raising more money. I offered $750 for it, but he again refused, insisting on $2,000. Perhaps someone told him that amount is what I paid for the Mitchell belt.



Promising heavyweight Ernie Schaaf, seen here after getting kayoed by Primo Carnera at New York's Madison Square Garden in the 13th round, had adopted Boston as his home, prompting a search for John L.'s famous belt to award to Schaaf.

Heavyweight champion Ingemar Johansson tries on the championship belt that had just been presented to him by Nat Fleischer, right. Left of Johansson is promoter Humbert J. Fugazy.

"I tried again later, but he had taken it to the Mint where it was melted down. He received from Uncle Sam $812 for the gold. That was in 1927. When I saw the belt it compared with the photograph in every detail. I know it was the original belt, except for the missing diamonds and other stones which had been removed."

Such was the fate of the most beautiful and famous pugilistic belt, once the proud possession of the world's most renowned pugilist: John L. Sullivan, a two-fisted drinker and rule-breaking idol who stirred the imagination of a growing America.

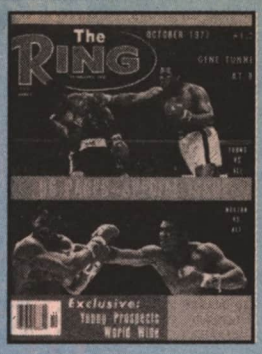
To go back to the beginning with boxing's first champion, James Figg in 1719, there was no mention of a trophy until England crowned her 19th champion, Tom Cribb, following his two smashing victories over Tom Molineaux in 1810 and 1811. For his two victories, the champion was presented the first belt ever recorded in boxing history as a token for his fistic supremacy. The belt was made of lion skin and ornamented with large, silver lion claws.

Cribb, a powerful 5'10", 195-pounder known as "The Gamest Of The Game," held the title 11 years without a challenge. His protege, Tom Spring, a clever boxer who defeated some good men, attracted serious attention when he beat Tom Oliver in 25 rounds near London on February 20, 1821. When Cribb retired, he awarded the championship belt to Spring, the first heavyweight champion to adopt a fighting name. His real name was Thomas Winter.

After two grueling 77- and 76-round victories over Nat Langham in 1824, Spring retired but did not give up the belt. Jem Ward claimed the vacant title after destroying Tom Cannon in 10 minutes on July 10, 1825. The victory included a championship belt.

In a battle for the world title on May 10, 1870, at Kennerville, Louisiana, Jem Mace knocked out the American champion, Tom Allen, in 10 rounds. He retired in 1890 after losing to Charley Mitchell in three rounds. Mace's championship belt was purchased by Nat Fleischer in 1930 for THE RING Museum. ■

THE RING, October 1977

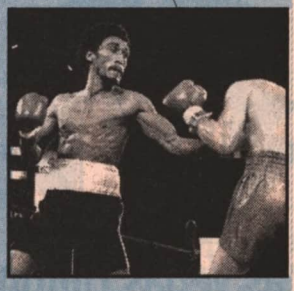


The Cover: THE RING took a look at the ultimate confrontation: the young, quick-fisted Cassius Clay vs. the more experienced, powerful Muhammad Ali. Each had a deadly jab, a potent right, and a crisp hook. What Ali did not have was the staying power of the younger Clay, and the ability to dance well into the later rounds. Clay did not miss very often, and it was determined that Ali, great as he is, would not beat his shadow, Cassius Clay.

Champs Without Belts: Wilfred Benitez and Alexis Arguello talk about why they were stripped of their titles. Benitez, the former WBA junior welterweight champion, forfeited his title for not giving Antonio Cervantes a rematch within two weeks. Arguello, the former WBA featherweight champion, said he lost his title because he retired from the division, though some hinted he could not make the weight.

Tunney At 80: THE RING visits with "The Fighting Marine" Gene Tunney on his 80th birthday at the prestigious New York City Athletic Club. New York Governor Hugh Carey stopped by to congratulate the former champ, who was still in fine health.

Riot In Madrid: An angry crowd responds by throwing beer cans into the ring after the decision is read giving Shengsak Muangsurin the victory over local favorite Perico Fernandez to retain the WBC junior welterweight title.

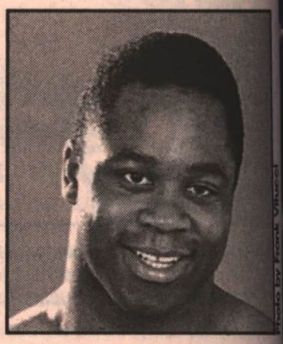


Fighter Of The Month: Samuel Serrano retains the WBA junior lightweight title with a 15-round unanimous decision over Venezuela's Lionel Hernandez. The Puerto Rican peppered Hernandez with his right hand on the way to his second successful defense of the belt he won from Ben Villaflor the previous year.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Nigel Collins

KUSHNER BEAMS UP KIRK



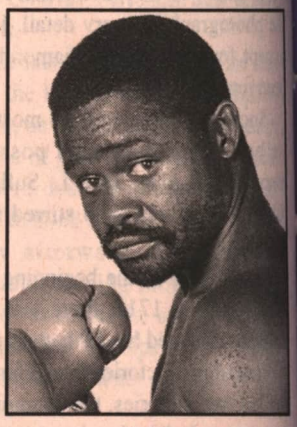
Johnson: Kushner wins bidding war for unbeaten heavyweight

After a spell with **Top Rank**, undefeated heavyweight **Kirk Johnson** has switched to **Cedric Kushner Productions**. Apparently, there was brisk bidding for the Canadian's services, with Top Rank, **Don King**, and British promoter **Roger Levitt** all making generous offers. It took a sizable signing bonus, but CKP came away with the prize.

"We were impressed with Kirk's skills, quick hands, and the fact he also takes a good punch," said CKP publicist **Gregory Juckett**. "He seems to have turned the corner in his last few fights, and appears ready to make a move into the big time."

Johnson's first fight for CKP will be a "Heavyweight Explosion" date in March, but don't expect the hot property to make too many appearances on the low-budget cable show. Kushner's goal is to make 1998 the year Johnson breaks away from the prospect pack and becomes a major player in the highly lucrative heavyweight division.

SCHOOL IN SESSION AGAIN FOR "PROFESSOR"



Nelson: No tuneups necessary

We haven't seen the last of future Hall of Famer **Azumah Nelson**. The two-division former champion has signed a two-year contract with **America Presents** that will bring him back to America sometime this year, probably in April. No opponent has been named yet, but according to America Presents' **Dan Goossen**, it will most likely be on a pay-per-view show.

"At this stage of his career, Azumah doesn't need any tuneups," said Goossen. "Nothing is for sure, but he might fight the **Arturo Gatti-Angel Manfredy** winner."

But why sign a long-term deal with a fighter who many believe is well past his prime?

"Whenever you've got the opportunity to sign a great fighter, even if it's at the tail end of his career, you do so," explained Goossen, who was in the losing corner when Nelson bombed out **Gabriel Ruelas** to regain the WBC super featherweight title in 1995. "Don't forget, a lot of people wrote Azumah off after he lost to **Jesse James Leija** in '94."

LISTEN UP

As we went to press, **Main Events** announced that **Lennox Lewis** will defend the WBC heavyweight crown against "linear" champion **Shannon Briggs** on March 28 at the Convention Hall in Atlantic City. **Caesars Atlantic City** will host the event and **HBO** will broadcast the bout live ... Main Events' tainted African heavyweight **Courage Tshabalala** is off to Moscow in March to tackle local favorite **Oleg Maskaev**, who is reshaping his career in his native land after setbacks against **Oliver McCall** and **David Tua** in this country ... Philadelphia promoter **Russell Peltz** intends to be the first to stage boxing at Temple University's new 11,000-seat fieldhouse, **The Apollo**. "It's a new venue in a traditional boxing neighborhood [North Philly], and has plenty of indoor parking," said Peltz. IBF super middleweight champion **Charles "The Hatchet" Brewer** will headline The Apollo's boxing debut, most likely in April.

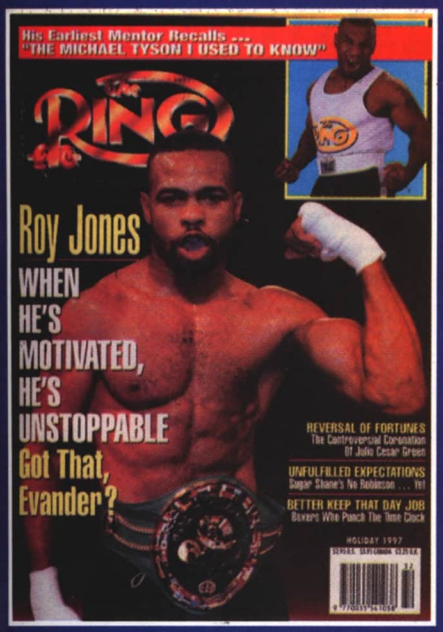
Las Vegas Hilton

FUTURE FIGHTS

By Art Manteris

VP/Director of Race and Sports Operations Las Vegas Hilton SuperBook

Favorite	Underdog	Odds	The Skinny
Lennox Lewis	Shannon Briggs	18-1	No contest
Erik Morales	Wayne McCullough	7-5	Great fight. I like Morales
Genaro Hernandez	Floyd Mayweather Jr.	8-5	A little too soon for the great prospect Mayweather
Evander Holyfield	Frans Botha	10-1	Only question is Holyfield's motivation
Evander Holyfield	Henry Akinwande	4½-1	Akinwande's size could create some problems



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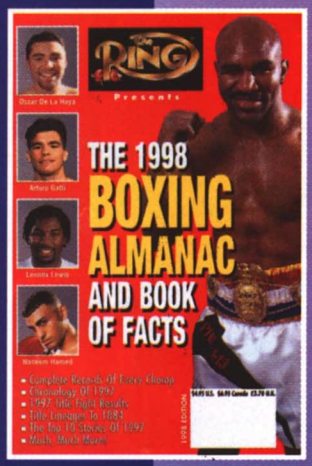

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